

Yemen army said massing near tribe holding Germans

SANAA (R) — Yemen has massed troops in an area where tribesmen are holding four German tourists hostage, as a deadline given to the adductors approaches, Yemeni sources said on Tuesday. A source close to the government said the troops gathered near the Serwah region in Marib governorate where the hostages, including three women, were being held. The source gave no further details. A tribal official said the captors had been given a deadline of midnight on Tuesday (2100 GMT) to release their hostages. Yemeni authorities began negotiations last week through a tribal leader to secure the Germans' release. Yemeni media have said the Bani Dabiyan tribe had made demands for improvements in their area, including schools and health centres, and also wanted cash worth about \$500,000.

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Princes Abdullah, Faisal and Ghazi conclude Saudi visit

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah, Prince Faisal and Prince Ghazi returned home Tuesday concluding a several-day visit to Saudi Arabia during which they performed the lesser pilgrimage (Umra). Their Royal Highnesses delivered a message from His Majesty King Hussein to King Fahd and held talks with senior Saudi officials on bilateral relations and means of bolstering them in various fields.

Saudi soldier killed near Iraqi border

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi soldier was shot dead near an Iraqi border post, in the first such incident since the 1991 Gulf war, the official news agency SPA said Tuesday. The soldier, named as Ibrahim Ahmad Al Johush, was shot dead by an assailant on board a vehicle inside Iraqi territory at the border post of Al Lifiya, it said. It did not give a date for the incident or other details.

Austrian president to remarry, paper says

VIENNA (R) — Austrian President Thomas Klestil, who divorced his wife after 41 years of marriage three months ago, is to marry a former aide 22 years his junior, *Kurier* newspaper reported on Tuesday. A spokesman for the 66-year-old president, who was re-elected to the largely ceremonial post of head of state in April, denied the newspaper's report that the wedding would take place on Friday. But spokesman Hans Magnus told Austria's APA news agency he could "neither confirm nor deny what other intentions the president might have."

Iran widens Tehran school closures

TEHRAN (R) — Iran on Tuesday ordered all schools and universities in Tehran closed until Saturday because of heavy air pollution, state television reported. It said all educational centres would be closed on Wednesday and Thursday. Friday is the weekly holiday in Iran. Heavy smog, with pollutants six times higher than accepted levels, had already prompted officials to close primary and secondary schools on Tuesday and primary schools on Monday. Pollution experts have asked old people and those with heart or respiratory diseases to leave the city and newspapers have reported deaths from heart attacks due to the thick smog. From Wednesday, traffic in Tehran will be restricted on the basis of vehicles' number plates, with odd and even numbers allowed to drive every other day, Tehran radio said earlier.

Women's groups call for a stop to Clinton's impeachment

WASHINGTON (AFP) — About 15 women's groups joined forces Tuesday to call for an end to the impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton, describing them as a "political travesty." While denouncing Clinton's sexual affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky as "especially abhorrent to feminist leaders," the representatives called on women's groups to mobilise to save Clinton's presidency. "We should not be lulled into complacency by the assumption that the U.S. Senate ultimately will not be able to put a stop to this madness," said Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority, a think tank based in Arlington, Virginia.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي.

Albright stresses Jordan's 'involvement' in final status issues 'U.S. seeking to almost double aid to Jordan'

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The U.S. administration will ask Congress to almost double aid to Jordan from \$225 million to \$425 million and will ensure coordination with the Kingdom in Palestinian-Israeli final status talks, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pledged here Tuesday.

"We intend to work with Congress to obtain \$200 million in additional security assistance to Jordan, in addition to our annual economic and military assistance programme for which we will seek \$225 million in the coming year," Albright said at a joint press conference with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent.

The previous figure of U.S. aid to Jordan was divided into \$150 million in economic assistance and \$75 million in military aid.

"On behalf of President [Bill] Clinton, I have assured the Crown Prince of America's ongoing commitment to help bring greater economic opportunities to the people of Jordan and to help Jordan meet its vital security needs," said Albright, who arrived in Amman from Gaza yesterday on a brief visit.

Stressing Jordan's "involvement and engagement in terms of final status issues when they arise," the Regent said: "When you talk about issues such as refugees, water, security, Jerusalem, you are by the very definition talking about overarching issues."

"The Jordanian peace treaty calls upon us to involve and invoke Jordanian interests when it comes to many of these issues."

"So I would like to point out that the process of conversation is important but in terms of the region's map for comprehensive peace to be truly comprehensive, then you have to encourage the involvement of all parties concerned, including, at a given moment, Syria and Lebanon."

Albright replied that "there [was] no question that Jordan is very much a part of [the peace process] and we will be coordinating with our Jordanian friends as we move forward on final status because a lot of these issues are larger than just between the two parties."

Prince Hassan and Albright discussed the outcome of President Clinton's three-day visit to Israel and Palestinian self-rule areas, as well as ways and means to ensure the imple-

mentation, so far stalling, of the Palestinian-Israeli Wye River accord.

Albright announced that a meeting in Gaza earlier on Tuesday between Clinton, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu resulted in the settling of the thorny issue of Palestinian prisoner releases "on a case by case basis."

"It was decided that there were a number of ways that the peace process could get back on track," Albright told reporters, "and one of them was that there is a channel for dealing with the prisoner question."

Prince Hassan emphasised the "importance of the achievement in demystifying some of the issues, such as the question of prisoners," that hindered implementation of the Oct 23 Wye deal.

Netanyahu's refusal to release Palestinian political prisoners sparked violent street protests last week and this week in the occupied territories, to which Israel retaliated by freezing a second troop redeployment from the West Bank that was scheduled under the Wye deal to take place by Friday.

Albright described as

"unfortunate" a statement issued by Netanyahu yesterday that there was "no need to hurry" and carry out the agreed redeployment.

"We've said all along that there are mutual obligations on both sides — this is the key to Wye," she said.

"Deployments cannot be off the table."

"There are parts of the agreement that the Israeli government signed, and they have to go forward, as the Palestinians have to fulfil their obligations," Albright stressed.

She also announced that during yesterday's meeting between Clinton, Arafat, and Netanyahu, it was decided that final status negotiations be "initiated officially and take place on a permanent basis."

"[Final status talks] have started and we hope they will continue," she said. A Palestinian-Israeli steering committee was to meet later yesterday to deal with "overall problems," while Israeli and Palestinian education ministers were scheduled to discuss "long term curriculum changes," the U.S. Secretary of State told the press.

Expressing Jordan's "deep appreciation for the personal commitment and dedication of President Clinton, Secretary

Albright, and the peace team," Prince Hassan said the U.S. Secretary of State's visit to the Kingdom was "a contribution to show visibly that once again Jordan stands out as a visible contributor and a visible partner in our shared common search for peace with a human face."

Albright reiterated American admiration for the courageous role played by His Majesty King Hussein and the government of Jordan in support of the Middle East peace process.

"Without King Hussein's presence at Wye, I think we would not have gotten as far," she said.

Albright praised Prince Hassan for "the superb leadership he has shown both domestically and internationally during the King's illness."

King Hussein has been undergoing chemotherapy in the U.S. since July.

"Although much changes in the Middle East, the tradition of effective leadership in Jordan carries on," she added.

Albright later rejoined Clinton on his visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories — the first ever by a U.S. president — after her talks in Amman.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Tuesday address a joint press conference after a meeting during which Albright briefed the Crown Prince on her visit with U.S. President Bill Clinton to Israel and the Palestinian territories (Photo by Boghos)

Clinton ends mission, fails to budge Israel on pullback

Israel publishes list of Palestinian 'violations'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel on Tuesday published a list of alleged Palestinian violations of the Wye River peace accord, within hours of a summit with U.S. President Bill Clinton which failed to get the land-for-security deal back on track.

An official statement said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had given the 12-point list to Clinton and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at the three-way summit along the Gaza-Israel border.

The summit broke without any joint statement and Netanyahu announced afterwards that his government would not carry out a promised further West Bank withdrawal required by the Wye accord by Friday, until the Palestinians ended their violations of the agreement.

The list included demands that Palestinians renounce any intention of unilaterally declaring an independent state, accept Israel's criteria for the release of prisoners, confiscate illegal weapons, reduce the size of the Palestinian police, clamp down on anti-Israel incitement and crack down on violence.

Clinton said the three-way summit was meant to pursue procedural steps to push forward the Wye River land-for-security accord they signed in October.

"I have achieved what I came here to achieve," Clinton told reporters after the summit, held at the crossing between Israel and Gaza on the final day of his three-day Middle East visit.

"We now have to decide practical means to go forward and I think we are well on the way to doing that," Clinton said, adding that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright would return to the region in a few weeks time.

But Clinton and Netanyahu, speaking separately after the two-hour meeting, gave no indication that Israel would honour a Dec. 18 date laid down in Wye for a second Israeli handover of occupied West Bank land to Palestinian self-rule.

Libyan assembly backs Lockerbie trial plan

TRIPOLI (AP) — Libya's parliament on Tuesday gave its conditional approval for the trial of two suspects in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, saying that obstacles must be overcome before the men are handed over.

Western diplomats in Libya said the parliament's statement appeared to be a major step toward a trial. It "means that they will handover the suspects sooner rather than later," said one diplomat, speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

"It looks like they've made a

clear decision, but we don't know if this is the final line or what the time-scale is," he added.

The General People's Congress, Libya's parliament, expressed "satisfaction with the agreement of the Libyan, British and American sides on trying the two suspects in the Lockerbie incident in a third country."

But a statement, read on state-run television during a televised meeting of the parliament, made no mention of whether Libya would hand over the two suspects. The par-

liament ended its eight-day meeting Tuesday afternoon.

The congress also asked "these sides to work on removing any obstacle preventing the two suspects from standing trial as soon as possible." It did not say what the obstacles were.

Libya already has accepted in principle to the trial of the two suspects before a panel of Scottish judges in the Netherlands. The handover of the men has been held up because of Libya's demand for guarantees that the two men, if convicted, would be jailed in

Libya.

Libyan media had earlier suggested that Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi did not have the authority to handover the suspects and indicated that any such decision should be approved by the People's Congress.

Britain said the Libyan statements were encouraging.

"We have seen the very limited reports based on Libyan television and, if true, then it is very encouraging," said a Foreign Office spokesman, speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

Israel finance minister asks to quit

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Finance Minister Yacov Neeman has told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu he intends to resign his post, Netanyahu's spokesman said on Tuesday.

"We confirm that Finance Minister Neeman requested to tender his resignation before he went on holiday and that the prime minister said they will discuss this on his return," said the spokesman, Aviv Bushinsky.

Neeman's spokesman Moti Sherf declined to comment on the resignation request. Israel's Channel One television said Neeman would submit his resignation in writing at the start of next week upon his return from a European ski holiday.

Political sources said Netanyahu was likely to accept the resignation.

Bushinsky gave no explanation of why Neeman, an independent technocrat and a close ally of Netanyahu, had asked to leave his post only two weeks before a deadline for the passage of the 1999 state budget.

Netanyahu is struggling to stay in power amid hard-line opposition in this right-wing coalition to his land-for-security peace accord with the Palestinians and faces a key no-confidence vote in parliament next Monday.

Neeman has expressed frustration that coalition disarray has prevented passage of the 1999 budget, which has only

passed one of three readings in parliament required by Dec. 31.

Neeman has repeatedly delayed bringing the budgetary arrangements bill, a necessary precursor to the state budget, before parliament out of fear he had no majority.

Avraham Ravitz, chairman of parliament's finance committee, said he spoke with Neeman before he departed on holiday and "understood from the conversation that it was the end of the road for him and in his opinion, for the government."

"The failure to pass a budget has to be seen as a failure on the part of any finance minister," Ravitz said.

Butler finishing report on Iraqi compliance

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler put the finishing touches Tuesday on a report to Secretary-General Kofi Annan on whether Iraq has cooperated fully with weapons experts during the past month.

Butler has already reported that Iraq's compliance has been far from perfect: Baghdad denied the inspectors access to two sites, refused to hand over several key documents, and imposed unacceptable conditions during several inspections.

Nonetheless, most inspections passed off without incident and Baghdad-based monitoring teams went into the field Tuesday. The last three visiting teams, which carried out surprise inspections over the past week, left Monday.

The U.N. Security Council says a comprehensive review of Iraq's compliance with U.N. resolutions — which Baghdad desperately wants — will only go ahead if Butler reports that Iraq has resumed full cooperation with inspectors.

RJ strives to reduce heavy burden of debts as it heads for privatisation

By Ghadeer Taher

AMMAN — Royal Jordanian flies into the next year still carrying a heavy debt burden as it continues with implementation of an eight-month privatisation scheme and gears up to join forces with a strategic equity partner by the end of 1999.

The national airline, celebrating its 35th anniversary, is working with legal and financial advisors to help restore the financial health of the airline, straddled with a total debt of \$607 million, mainly to foreign and local banks for aircraft leasing. Royal Jordanian (RJ) President Nader Dahabi said Tuesday. He said that JD160 million of that is owed to the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company.

Dahabi told a news conference the airline's finances were improving and

that while operating profits were \$27 million until November of this year, the company still had a budget deficit of \$11 million, due mainly to debt servicing. However, he said this year's deficit is 50 per cent less than for 1997.

"We are paying our debts [for the planes and to foreign banks]," said Dahabi, in a candid discussion of the airline's finances and future prospects. "We could not pay our debt to local banks so we rescheduled," he said.

Royal Jordanian, the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company and the Social Security Corporation are trying to reach a settlement on the outstanding debt, Dahabi said, keeping the door open on the option of offering shares to offset the debt. He said RJ paid JD12 million to the refinery

in 1998. "We are serious about privatisation," said Dahabi. "Royal Jordanian and the financial advisor have started a preliminary search for a strategic partner...to put potential partners in the picture."

Last October the government agreed with French Banque Paribas and British law firm Clifford Chance to assist it in evaluating the airline's assets, restructuring the balance sheet, and recommending ways to handle the airline's debt.

The government, which has put forward an ambitious schedule for the completion of a World Bank blueprint for privatising the airline, expects to be ready to sell a stake in a new debt-free operating subsidiary eight months after finalising the restructuring process.

Dahabi, who is also chief executive officer of the airline, did not exclude teaming up with Asian or Gulf airlines as well as European or American carriers.

It is envisioned that the debt-free subsidiary would handle the aviation part of the business and include the aircraft, routes and technical support, while RJ, which would own the government's share in the subsidiary, would sell its currently profitable operations such as the duty free shops, its catering business, maintenance and training workshops.

The airline is replacing its TriStars, which require a high running cost, with Airbus planes, Dahabi said. He said that by replacing the fleet, RJ would save JD33 million on each plane annually.

"By selling TriStars we will pay our

debt and cut running costs," said Dahabi.

In an attempt to streamline operations, Dahabi said a technical team is assessing the financial viability of routes. The airline will officially inaugurate the Amman-Shannon route next month.

Asked about laying off employees in a new restructured carrier, Dahabi said: "Today, it is premature to speak about what a restructured RJ would look like...or to speak about reducing the size of routes, the number of planes and employees."

Informed sources said the airline, which until recently employed around 5,000 staff worldwide, has frozen hiring and has reduced the number of employees by 10 per cent compared to 1997.

Ecevit suffers setback in Turkey government search

ANKARA (R) — Prime Minister-designate Bülent Ecevit said on Tuesday he had rejected a coalition offer from a rival leftist for fear such a government could revive violent antagonism between Turkey's left and right.

Ecevit is struggling to forge a new Turkish government but his search suffered a setback after he failed to reach agreement with rival leftist Deniz Baykal.

Any new administration, the sixth since 1995, is likely to be only a stop-gap

measure until general elections next April.

Baykal said he had rejected Ecevit's offer of a place in a minority coalition along with Mesut Yilmaz's conservative party. Ecevit in turn said Baykal's proposal of a coalition between their rival leftist parties without Yilmaz "could lead to polarisation between the right and the left" and possible street violence between left and right groups. "My worry is that [such a coalition] could bring back the left-

right violence of the 1970s," Ecevit told reporters in parliament. "I have serious doubts [it] would be able to achieve harmony."

Ecevit served as prime minister during years of turbulent street violence in the late 1970s which eventually led to military intervention to restore order.

Passionate left- and right-wing university students still clash intermittently but far less than 20 years ago.

Turkey's powerful armed forces still wield influence

over the political scene, although now their prime concern is to restrict the power of Turkey's large Islamist movement.

Ecevit, a staunch secularist, has so far excluded the main opposition Islamists, the largest group in parliament, from his search for a government to replace that of Yilmaz, toppled last month by corruption charges.

The political instability has come as Turkey's economy is heading for a slump.



ALTERCATION AT CLINTON'S HOTEL: An Israeli border guard Tuesday separates Meir Indoog, right, the leader of an Israeli group called Victims of Arab Terror, from a fellow Israeli outside of President Clinton's hotel in Jerusalem. Indoog came under attack for protesting remarks made by Clinton in which he compared Israeli terror victims to Palestinian children whose fathers are serving jail terms in Israeli jails (AP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Agricultural engineers open meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — The Arab Agricultural Engineers Federation Tuesday opened a four-day meeting in Amman on the role of educational institutions in promoting agricultural training in the Arab World. Delegates representing Arab states and concerned ministries of agriculture and regional and international scientific research centres are discussing factors impeding the educational institutions' contributions to the sustainable agricultural development of the Arab World.

U.S. increases support to UNRWA

AMMAN (J.T.) — U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton announced Monday that the U.S. government has pledged an increase of 4.5 per cent in its 1999 annual contribution to UNRWA, which will stand at \$73 million next year, an UNRWA statement said. The announcement came in an address by Mrs. Clinton at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's Women's Programme Centre in Beach Camp in Gaza, where she recommended that other donor countries increase their contribution to UNRWA. Mrs. Clinton remarked on the difficulties faced by women in Gaza over the years and congratulated the women present on the work they had done in building their businesses while continuing to raise their families.

Meguid to discuss Jerusalem with Pope

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid on Tuesday embarked on a five-day visit to Italy and the Vatican during which he will hold talks with Pope John Paul II on the future status of occupied Jerusalem. "I will meet the pontiff on Friday at the Vatican to discuss Jerusalem and as part of efforts to secure the necessary Christian and Muslim support for Jerusalem which is considered one of the most important issues in [Palestinian-Israeli] final status talks," Abdul Meguid told reporters. He will also meet with Italian government officials to discuss the troubled Middle East peace process and Italy's role within the European Union (EU) to help secure progress in the negotiations.

Libya reshuffles cabinet

TUNIS (R) — Libya on Tuesday reshuffled its cabinet, merging the justice and public order ministries again and returning the pan-Arab unity affairs to the foreign affairs ministry. Prime Minister Mohammad Ahmad Al Mangoush, Foreign Affairs Minister Omar Mustafa Al Montaser, and Energy Minister Abdullah Salem Al Badri were confirmed at their posts. Libyan television monitored in Tunis reported. Also confirmed were Finance Minister Mohammad Beit Al Mal, and Central Bank Governor Tahir Jehimi as well as non-cabinet minister for the Great-Man-Made-River Project Abdulmajid Al Gu'ud.

Iran, Iraq to exchange more prisoners

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran and Iraq will exchange an unspecified number of prisoners on their border on Wednesday in the presence of Red Cross representatives and military officials. Radio Tehran said Tuesday. The prisoner exchange is part of an agreement concluded during bilateral talks last month in Tehran on prisoners from the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Italy dismisses Turkish talk of expelling Ocalan

ROME (R) — Italy on Tuesday dismissed as "fantastical" comments attributed to Turkey's outgoing prime minister that Rome was prepared to hand over a detained Kurdish guerrilla leader to a third country.

"None of the fantastical theories put forward by the Turkish daily Hurriyet, and attributed to outgoing Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, on supposed offers from other countries or Italy's decision to send Abdullah Ocalan away, has been or is being considered," the Italian prime minister's office and the foreign ministry said in a terse joint statement.

Hurriyet quoted Yilmaz as saying Turkey and Italy were in negotiations to send Ocalan from Italy to a third country and that Italy was considering Albania, among other options. "They will definitely send him to a third country. We proposed Pakistan, but they said no. They wanted North Korea, but we did not. Now Albania is on the agenda. We will have no objection to that country," Hurriyet quoted Yilmaz as saying.

Yilmaz was toppled last month over corruption charges against his government, and a new prime minister-designate, Bülent Ecevit, is trying to form a new coalition. Relations between NATO allies Italy and Turkey have

been strained since Ocalan's arrest in Rome on Nov. 12.

Italy says it cannot extradite him to Turkey because he could face the death penalty there.

Turkey has charged Ocalan with treason and holds him and his Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) responsible for the deaths of more than 29,000 people killed by Kurdish fighters and Turkish armed forces during the Kurds' 14-year fight for self-rule.

Ocalan has applied for political asylum in Italy and lives in a Rome villa under police surveillance. An interior ministry commission is due to deliberate on his asylum request at the end of December, but the final word belongs to the government.

Given that senior ministers, including Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema, have said Ocalan should be given a fair trial, it was considered unlikely the centre-left government would grant him asylum.

Ocalan on Sunday distanced himself from the armed conflict, saying he would have nothing to do with guerrillas if they chose to pursue their campaign. There was no immediate response from Turkish authorities, but Ankara has strongly rejected negotiating with the PKK, which it brands as "terrorist."

Syrian press blasts cancellation of clauses in Palestinian Charter

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria's official press on Tuesday criticised the vote removing anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian Charter.

The vote removing anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian Charter was a reference to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Describing as a "total capitulation" the vote held in Gaza City on Monday in the presence of U.S. President Bill Clinton, the newspaper said "the events of yesterday

revealed the reality that peace in the region has become impossible in the current circumstances and with the current balance of forces."

"What is happening has nothing to do with peace but shows that there is an Israeli plan backed by the United States to kill off the peace process," Al Baath said.

Peace negotiations between Israel

and Syria have been frozen for nearly three years. Syria is demanding the return of the Golan Heights occupied by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and illegally annexed in 1981.

Clinton, on the first visit to Palestinian-ruled territory by a U.S. president, attended a gathering of the Palestinian leadership during which

a vote was taken confirming the annulment of anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian National Charter.

Al Baath said Clinton's visit was not aimed at saving peace "but at achieving Israel's aims and wiping out the rights of the Palestinian people, their hopes for the liberation of all occupied land and the establishment of an independent state."

JTV to put more emphasis on local drama serials during Ramadan

By a Jordan Times Reporter

AMMAN — State-run Jordan Television has said it will put more emphasis on locally produced drama serials during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, set to start Sunday or Monday.

JTV Director Nidal Dalqamuni, said emphasis during the Ramadan cycle of programmes will be placed on quality, not quantity, to help entertain viewers who often stay up until the break of dawn to have their last meal before they start the day-long fast.

Most viewers have often complained that the corporation's programmes are not as interesting as the ones screened on famous Arab satellite stations.

Dalqamuni said an average Jordanian likes to see one or two light drama series, comedies and

quizzes. "And these will be on the top of the list," he said.

He added that the corporation would not transmit quality films like "The Message," "Khaled Ben Al Walid," "Salah Al Din," and "Omar Al Mukhtar" because viewers have seen these productions over and over again.

"People know them by heart," he told a press briefing held on Sunday to unveil the Ramadan programmes.

Dalqamuni said the corporation was "willing to bring any new good films," but he added that there were only around 10 quality Arabic films suitable for religious occasions.

"My aim is to further increase Jordanian production in the coming years. However, the quality of scripts offered for television programmes often are of poor quality," he said.

The high cost of production, lack of advanced technical facilities and well-trained actors were other obstacles in the way of good quality programmes, he explained.

Saleh Irtehem, programme director of JTV's Arabic channel (Channel 1), said broadcasts during Ramadan will start at 10 a.m. and end at 2 a.m.

Adnan Zou'bi, director of JTV's satellite channel, added that during the Holy Month there will be strong cooperation between his department and Channel 1.

"In the past, there were problems with producers who insisted on the broadcast of a product on Channel 1 before it would be beamed on the satellite channel," he said.

The JTV Ramadan programme comprises seven drama serials, seven various live broadcasts, two contests or quizzes, and 15 different religious dramas,

which make 57 per cent of the planned broadcasts during Ramadan.

Other serials during Ramadan are from various Arab countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which make 43 per cent of the remaining programming during Ramadan.

The English channel of JTV will broadcast a special programme on Islam for the foreign community in Jordan. At the iftar (breaking of the fast), the channel will be linked to the Arabic Channel 1. At 6:15 p.m. there will be a daily Egyptian religious serial entitled "Omar Ben Abdul Aziz," which will be subtitled in English. At 8 p.m., a talk show in English, "Islam in a Changing World," will

alternate daily with a serial documentary on Islamic art entitled "Journey into the Arab World."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Cartoon — "The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin"
15:30 Children's Programme — Halfway to Cross the Galaxy and Turn Left
16:00 French Documentary
16:30 Masters of the Maze
17:00 French programme
18:15 Drama — Wind at My Back
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French programme
19:30 News headlines
19:35 Comedy — 2 Point 4 Children
20:00 Doc. — Envoye Special Magazine
20:30 Drama — NYPD Blue
21:15 The Great Moments of Science and Technology
21:30 Faces and Places
22:00 News in English
22:30 Cover Story
23:10 The Album Show
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

05:01 Fajr
06:24 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:31 Dhuhr
14:15 Asr
16:38 Maghreb
18:01 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweilieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Aftem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweilieh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Relative cold weather conditions will prevail and skies partly cloudy. There will be a chance of scattered showers and winds southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman06/14
Jerash10/16
Deserts04/16
Jordan Valley12/22

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 15, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 43 per cent, Aqaba 52 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun04/10
Jerash10/16
Um Qays08/15
Madaba05/13
Petra04/15
Dead Sea12/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Khalid Abdo4657129

Dr. Bassam Karadsheh 4389200
Dr. Fakiri Tayeh4915880
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi4894788
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Rakad Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Lutfi Shalabi021241789
Fou'ad Pharmacy021275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Samir Al Lawzi09903469
Palestine Pharmacy09983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic office4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Complaints4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdi5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Aklieh Maternity464441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Mushar Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhsin4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital09983523
Zarqa National Hospital09900560
Ibn Sina Hospital09985731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital021275555
Roman Catholic Hospital021272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital0217101372, 0217103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital0217102831, 0217102011
Specialty Hospital0217103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03104111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44153200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30 Damascus (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

09:55 Larnaca (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:50 Istanbul (RJ)
17:05 Paris (RJ)
17:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
17:55 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
18:10 Rome (RJ)
18:20 Brussels, Berlin (RJ)
23:10 Rome (RJ)
23:59 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights
09:30 Cairo (MS)
10:30 Jeddah (SV)
12:20 Kuwait (KU)
13:10 Tunis (TU)
13:20 Bahrain (GF)
14:05 Rome (AZ)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
15:30 Algiers (AR)
18:05 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:15 Frankfurt (LH)
00:55 London, Damascus (BA)
01:25 Athens (OA)
02:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:30 Haifa (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

06:50 Larnaca (RJ)
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
09:45 Rome (RJ)
11:00 Istanbul (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
19:30 Colombo (RJ)
19:35 Beirut (RJ)
20:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:15 Bombay (RJ)
20:25 Cairo (RJ)
20:35 New Delhi (RJ)
21:00 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
00:40 Sanaa (RJ)
02:40 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
06:30 Larnaca (CY)
07:25 Damascus, London (BA)
07:25 Paris (AP)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
12:00 Medina, Jeddah (SV)
13:20 Kuwait (KU)
14:10 Bahrain (GF)
14:10 Tunis (TU)
15:30 Vienna (OS)
15:30 Rome (AZ)
16:20 Sharjah (AH)
19:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
02:45 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Haifa (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

AMMAN — The Amman Municipality has approved a plan to build a housing estate for industrial workers in the city.

The plan, which was approved by the municipal council, aims to provide housing for the growing number of industrial workers in the city.

The housing estate will be built in the industrial zone of the city, and will consist of a number of small, self-contained units.

The municipal council also approved a plan to build a new market in the city, which will provide a place for the sale of fresh produce and other goods.

The new market will be built in the central part of the city, and will provide a place for the sale of fresh produce and other goods.

The municipal council also approved a plan to build a new school in the city, which will provide education for the growing number of children in the city.

The new school will be built in the central part of the city, and will provide education for the growing number of children in the city.

The municipal council also approved a plan to build a new park in the city, which will provide a place for recreation and leisure for the growing number of people in the city.

The new park will be built in the central part of the city, and will provide a place for recreation and leisure for the growing number of people in the city.

The municipal council also approved a plan to build a new library in the city, which will provide a place for the borrowing and reading of books.

The new library will be built in the central part of the city, and will provide a place for the borrowing and reading of books.

The municipal council also approved a plan to build a new sports ground in the city, which will provide a place for the playing of sports and other recreational activities.

The new sports ground will be built in the central part of the city, and will provide a place for the playing of sports and other recreational activities.

The municipal council also approved a plan to build a new community centre in the city, which will provide a place for the holding of community events and other social activities.

The new community centre will be built in the central part of the city, and will provide a place for the holding of community events and other social activities.

Amman municipality plans housing estate for industrial workers

AMMAN (Petra) — The Greater Amman Municipality is planning to build a "workers city" on a 150-square kilometre area east of the ring road surrounding Amman.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid said the workers city, whose area will be equal to one quarter of the total area of Amman, will house employees of the industrial centres located in the Zarqa and Sahab areas.

Hadid also announced that the municipality is going ahead with plans to find solutions to 18 dangerous traffic junctions within the Amman region and has been in contact with a number of engineering firms to prepare a feasibility study for the project.

Referring to the municipality's planned projects for 1999, Hadid said work will continue on the Ras Al Ain cultural centre, which is due to be completed by the end of the year 2000.

According to Hadid, the cultural centre will be adjacent to a JD500,000 car park complex which includes the construction of a JD750,000 tunnel in addition to a JD1.5 million overpass. He said the municipality is also planning to construct two tunnels at the Seventh Circle at the cost of around JD1.5 million.

The municipality is planning to build more ring roads and radial roads to solve the increasing number of traffic bottlenecks and the growing number of vehicles on the roads, according to Hadid.

In 1999, the municipality hopes to complete work on Al Urdun Street, which runs from Martyr's Monument to the Abu Nuseir suburb, and plans to widen the 5.5 km thoroughfare from Al Quds Street to Madaba Street to 40 metres in width, the mayor said.

Hadid added that the municipality will build gardens and parks and plant trees to green the country and stem the encroachment of desert lands westwards. In this respect, he said, the municipality plans public gardens in the neighbourhoods of Marka, Ras Al Ain, Qweismeh, Mugabalin, Bader and Abu Nuseir.

The municipality has floated a tender for processing waste to produce methane gas, and by the middle of January, it will announce the name of the company that will carry out the estimated \$5 million project, which is being financed by the U.N. and the governments of Denmark and Jordan, according to Hadid.



HRH Princess Basma meets Tuesday with Fawaz Fokeladeh, director of the UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States, who is currently on a tour to the Arab region (Petra photo)

Princess Basma meets with UNDP official

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Tuesday met with a senior U.N. official responsible for development projects in the Arab World and expressed Jordan's interest in enhancing cooperation between the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) and the United Nations Development Programme.

Princess Basma, chairperson of the QAF, said she has

been witnessing with satisfaction the ongoing progress of cooperation between the two sides to further socio-economic development in Jordan.

Fawaz Fokeladeh, director of the UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States, who is now touring the Arab region, praised the QAF's projects, which he said are linked to and helping to meet the needs of the local communities.

Fokeladeh said the UNDP will continue close cooperation in developing joint projects.

UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner and officials from other U.N. agencies attended the meeting at the Princess's office.

Afterwards, Fokeladeh and his delegation toured a centre entrusted with executing small-size projects and another centre run by the QAF and funded by the Canadian

International Development Agency which finances income-generating projects.

The U.N. official was briefed by Amr Bakeer, QAF projects director, about the projects' objectives of finding jobs for the needy and unemployed.

The delegation also inspected the Sahab centre for social development and received briefings on the activities of its kindergarten and vocational training units.

Air France in negotiations to fly to Jordan through Israeli airspace

'No immediate plans for flights to Gaza airport'

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Air France on Tuesday said it will not operate commercial flights to the new Gaza International Airport in 1999 but did not rule out such flights in the future.

According to Air France Middle East General Manager Franck Thiebaut, any decision to fly to Gaza will depend largely on political developments in the region.

Thiebaut, who was speaking at a press conference, said the French airline is negotiating with authorities in Tel Aviv and Amman to allow Air France

aircraft to use Israeli air space during flights to Jordan.

The official said that no agreement has been reached with the Israeli side, but stressed that such an accord is expected to be finalised soon.

He added that using Israeli airspace will cut flight time from Paris to Amman by 20 minutes.

Thiebaut said Air France, which will be privatised next year, earned a net profit of 1.3 billion francs (around \$235 million) in the first half of the firm's fiscal calendar for 1998, April to September, as a result of cost-cutting measures and an

increase in sales.

Air France Regional Manager for Jordan, the West Bank and Iraq Jean-Jacques Ledauphin said the French national carrier is considering increasing its flights to and from Jordan by the year 2000.

Ledauphin said increasing the number of flights would satisfy the "high demand" by French tourists planning to visit Jordan.

Last April, the French-flag carrier began operating four non-stop flights from Amman to Paris, replacing the flights that used to connect through Damascus. The new route led

to a 32 per cent increase in revenues in 1998 compared to the previous year.

Air France figures showed that it has carried 30,000 passengers to and from Amman so far this year, compared to 13,000 during the same period of 1997, a 120 per cent increase.

The company, which maintains an alliance with two American airlines, Delta and Continental, has also increased the number of passengers travelling between Amman and the United States by 220 per cent through Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport, Ledauphin said.

'Prosecutor to ask for lifting of deputy's immunity'

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordan News Agency, Petra, Tuesday said the prosecutor general at the Criminal Court has sent a letter to Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali asking the House to lift the immunity of Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi.

Informal sources told the Jordan Times yesterday that Abbadi

would be facing the charge of sexual assault.

However, sources close to Majali denied that the speaker had received a request from the prosecutor.

The Constitution stipulates that "senators and deputies cannot be detained or prosecuted while Parliament is in session unless an absolute majority of the chamber to which the deputy or senator

belongs finds enough evidence to detain or prosecute the member."

Abbadi, famous for his fiery speeches at Parliament, stirred a controversy last year during the budget debate when he attacked several ministers and the General Intelligence Department as well as other institutions.

One deputy said yesterday that although Abbadi is not very popular among his colleagues, he did

not believe the House would vote to lift his immunity.

"There is a widespread belief among deputies that the case should be pursued after the end of this session," he said.

Other sources, however, told the Jordan Times that the 21-year-old woman involved in the case had an affair with Abbadi, who allegedly had promised to marry her.

'Legal action on IPC pipelines case unlikely'

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — After more than six weeks of in-depth investigations, informed sources yesterday said legal action concerning the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipelines sale seemed unlikely since there was no evidence of embezzlement or corruption but rather an "unintentional" flaw in bid procedures.

"In the final report of the official investigation committee that was submitted recently to the government, and will be reviewed [Wednesday] by Parliament, there was no evidence of embezzlement in the IPC pipelines case," the sources told the Jordan Times on Tuesday.

"However, the outcome of today's meeting between Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki and the Lower House Energy and Natural Resources Committee is very important for the fate of the IPC case," said one source.

On Nov. 21, the government halted all procedures related to the sale of 50 kilometres of 12-inch pipelines and 60 kilometres of 16-inch pipelines which formed part of a disused pipeline from Iraq to Haifa, and ordered that work on removing the segments be

stopped.

Last week, the heads of two committees appointed by the government on Nov. 22 to investigate the IPC case and representatives of the Audit Bureau concluded their joint assessment of the pipelines deal and submitted the final report to Mulki.

The source, however, said the final report included details about the legality and the value of the bid as well as the possible uses of the pipelines.

"It is now clear that the sale of the pipelines was worth up to JD1.5 million, and in any case definitely more than the JD250,000 which the contractor had paid for the pipeline," said the source.

"The investigation committee discovered a flaw in the bid procedures, but no evidence of any embezzlement," the source said.

The bidding committee did not adhere to the procedures followed in such cases, the report concluded.

"It seems that the bidding committee closed the tender to the public before the deadline," said the source.

As for the present condition of the IPC pipelines, the source added, "the field investigations showed that about 50 per cent of the 12-inch

pipelines and 25 per cent of the 16-inch pipelines were worn out."

But he said the technical investigation committee reached the conclusion that the present condition of the pipelines does not allow for their use in either water or oil projects.

The government issued instructions to store all IPC pipelines at the Aqaba Region Authority pending the conclusion of the investigation. Mulki also sent two legal memoranda to Akram Amr, Abu Amr, who won the bid on July 20, telling him to stop work immediately as he was violating the deal by taking parts of another pipeline that were not included in the official bid.

The pipeline, linking Iraq's northern city of Kirkuk with the Mediterranean city of Haifa via Jordan, was totally shut down after the 1948 war that led to Israel's creation.

It was initially built by a British company in the early 1930s for the Iraqi Petroleum Company.

In a minor Jordanian-Iraqi border demarcation in the early 1980s, Amman was eventually given additional parts of the pipeline which passed through the new areas.

Deputies ask for explanation of bakeries' alleged use of suspect substance

AMMAN (J.T.) — Several deputies are asking the government to explain why some bakeries are allegedly using additives believed to be carcinogenic in their products, Deputy Mohammad Bani Hani said Tuesday.

"We have to investigate the issue and listen to the government's explanation, and then if it's proven that such violations have occurred, we will call on the government to take the necessary measures," said Bani Hani, a member of the Lower House Health Committee.

But an official from the Ministry of Industry and Trade told the Jordan Times that no bakeries in the Kingdom were using such ingredients, which contain sodium bromide, a substance banned by the Ministry of Industry and Trade from use in commercial baking.

Three bakeries, located outside the capital, were closed eight months ago for using the substance, said one official from the Quality Control

Department at the ministry who requested anonymity. The discoveries were made during spot checks of bakeries by the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The ministry official added that bakery owners used the material out of ignorance. "They did not know it causes cancer. The material is flammable and could blow the whole bakery shop," he added.

Another deputy played down the issue, which was raised earlier this week by one local newspaper in a report about the government shutting down the three bakeries.

"Nobody knows for sure whether the substance causes cancer. I believe the issue was raised to tarnish Jordan's reputation and cause panic among Jordanians," said Ghazi Obaidat, a member of the Lower House's Health Committee and an oncologist.

Abdul Rahim Malhas, a former health minister, said government measures to stem such violations are not strict

enough. "The penalties should be increased, and there should be more regular inspections of bakeries across the country," he added.

According to the law, bakery owners can receive sentences of up to three months in prison and fines up to JD5,000, for using illegal additives. The law also stipulates that bakeries using sodium bromide substances will be closed indefinitely until the bakery owner complies with the law, said the ministry official.

Officials from the Health Ministry and the Ministry of Industry and Trade told the Jordan Times that the two ministries conduct regular random inspections at least every week in bakeries across the Kingdom.

"The Ministry of Health takes samples of the raw dough as well as the baked bread and conducts tests on them to make sure the products are suitable for human consumption," said one official.

Bail refused for former tobacco company official accused of embezzlement

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Court of First Instance has refused to release the former chairman and director of the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Company on bail, his lawyer said Tuesday.

"Ali Farid Sa'd [the former director and one of the biggest shareholders in the tobacco company] was arrested for questioning, and no charges have been pressed against him yet," Saleh Jeldudi added.

Sa'd and 12 other employees of the debt-ridden company

were arrested earlier this week in connection with the alleged embezzlement of JD15 million of the company's funds. The prosecutor general ordered that the suspects be held in custody for 14 days at Juweideh prison.

According to Fathallah Emrani, vice president of the Jordan Trade Union and a member of the company's board of directors, the alleged fraud was discovered by an auditor appointed by the new management to verify the company's records.

The tobacco company's crisis started after the Arab Bank filed a lawsuit against the manufacturer for defaulting on JD5.5 million loan.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade dissolved the company's board of directors and appointed a special committee, comprising representatives of the private and public sectors, to manage the troubled company.

According to the company's records, the 67-year-old firm's indebtedness to local banks was around JD22 million.

RSS demonstrates Arabic module of language project

AMMAN (J.T.) — A team from the Computer Technology, Training and Industrial Studies Centre at the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) has demonstrated the Arabic module of the Universal Networking Language (UNL) project at United Nations headquarters, the RSS said Tuesday.

The UNL is an electronic language that enables people who speak different native languages to communicate with each other. Consisting of three interlinked computer software programmes, each of which is in the network of the World

Wide Web, UNL will be accessible to any Internet user and compatible with standard network servers.

Text, written in a range of languages, may be converted into UNL (unconverted) and just as easily, UNL text may be converted into native languages (deconverted). Unlike traditional language conversion methods, UNL avoids language analysis by utilising the common platform provided by the Internet, according to a press release issued by the RSS.

The aim of the UNL project is to eliminate language barriers by creating a

medium for information exchange that permits communication in users' native languages, it said. This project was launched in April 1996 by the United Nations University/Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU/IAS).

The initial phase of the project (1996-98) involved developing modules to convert 16 languages into UNL. These included the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish), in addition to 10 other widely-spoken languages (German, Hindi, Italian, Indone-

sian, Japanese, Latvian, Mongol, Portuguese, Swahili, and Thai). In its second phase (1999-2005), the project will seek to further extend UNL accessibility.

The RSS-developed Arabic module of the UNL project is one of the most advanced modules developed. Its main components are the Deconverter, Encoder and the Electronic Dictionary.

The UNL project will have many positive impacts across the Arab World. It is the first project to involve Arabic on this scale, said the statement.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

- * "A meeting with Iraqi artist Ismail Fatah by art critic Kifah Habib" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday Dec. 17 at 5:30 p.m.
- * "Jingle All the Way" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday Dec. 17 at 5:00 p.m.
- * "Children's film 'The Adventure of Pinocchio' at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

- * Christmas celebration with theatrical performance at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m. (Tel. 4610853).

EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL

- * Netherlands film "Karaker" at 5:00 p.m.
- * Swedish film "Passagenen" at 8:00 p.m. (to be shown on Thursday Dec. 17 at 5:00 p.m.)
- * All films, with subtitles in English, are screened at the Royal Cultural Centre.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Dec. 31 (Tel. 5699141/2).
- * Display of posters marking the anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights at the Greater Amman Municipality city hall, Ras Al Ain, until Dec. 17.
- * "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfidi Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.
- * Photography exhibition "Empiremen" (a photography trip from Morocco to Turkey) at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 17.
- * The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.
- * Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Baladina Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.

Ministry takes measures against parasites' entry into Jordan

By Ahmad Khafif

AMMAN — The Ministry of Agriculture is taking measures along Jordan's border with Iraq to spare the Kingdom's animals from a deadly parasite.

According to the head of the ministry's Veterinary Department, Assad Abu Ragheb, Jordan is studying how to prevent a possible infestation of the screw-worm fly, which hit Iraq in 1996.

Abu Ragheb told the Jordan Times yesterday that the Kingdom is still free of the parasite but that if it became established in the country, it could cost the nation dearly by killing livestock, poultry, canines, felines and other mammals. Abu Ragheb said several monitoring,

medical and public awareness teams have been formed and dispatched around the country to help prevent the entry of the worm from Iraq and to advise farmers, breeders and other citizens of the signs of possible infestation in their animals.

The defensive plans include setting traps for the worms as well as the construction of trenches and sand walls on the northeastern border to combat animal smuggling. Imported livestock will be more closely examined and monitored, Abu Ragheb said.

Similar activities to combat the worm are being conducted by Syria and Iraq. According to the Iraqi Veterinary General Department, Iraq has reported 60,000

cases of screwworm fly disease affecting hens, sheep, goats, cows, horses, dogs and cats across the country's 13 districts.

There are two species of screwworm fly: the Old World (Chrysomya bezziana) and the New World (Cochliomyia hominivorax) species. The flies are parasites affecting warm-blooded animals and are screw shaped and ringed with small threads.

They feed on live meat, causing large gaping wounds which may lead to dramatic loss of condition and even death of livestock, humans and living tissues.

Each female fly deposits about 200-400 eggs near an open wound. The larvae burrow into the tissue, drop to the ground when mature, and pupate before

emerging as adults.

Sterilisation of male flies has been used in attempts to control screwworms.

The Old World screwworm fly is found throughout much of Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and Papua-New Guinea. The New World screwworm fly is found in tropical and sub-tropical areas of Central and South America. It has been eliminated from the U.S. and most of Mexico.

In areas of the world where screwworm fly exists, every husbandry practice associated with wounds, including castration and dehorning, must be accompanied by inspection of those wounds to ensure the fly does not become established, experts said.

Thai Airways defends itself over crash

BANGKOK (R) — Thai Airways said Tuesday the jet that crashed in southern Thailand last week killing 101 people was in good condition and its pilots had followed normal safety procedures.

Dressed in mourning black, Thai Airways International president Thammoo Wanglee said the Airbus A310-200, which went down in a driving rain storm Friday night with 146 passengers and crew on board, had a complete overhaul in July.

"We regret terribly what happened and are waiting for the result of the investigation. But an initial probe has indicated that our pilots followed safety guidelines and the plane was in good condition," Thammoo told a news conference.

"Thai (Airways) will maintain its policy of not compromising when it comes to safety," he added. Hundreds of police, soldiers and local volunteers continued Tuesday to recover the mangled remains of the Airbus from the swamp into which it plunged.

Flight TG 261 was making its third attempt to land at Surat Thani Airport, a jumping-off point for travellers to the popular island resort of Koh Samui, when it hit the ground and caught fire.

Forty-five people, including three crew and 12 of the 25 foreigners on board, survived the accident after crawling or being dragged from the burning wreckage.

Officials said the fragments of the aircraft would be painstakingly reassembled in an aircraft hanger in Surat Thani to aid in an investigation of the crash.

Thammoo said the Airbus was built in 1986 and required a full overhaul every five years and a check every 15 months.

"The plane received its third overhaul, or D3 check, between April 27 and July 22, 1998. The last regular check, or C3 check, was conducted from Dec. 15 to Jan. 7 this year," he said.

Thammoo said weather conditions in Surat Thani when the Airbus left Bangkok Friday were good and the forecast called for visibility of about seven km, with rain clouds at a height of 549 metres and 3,355 metres.

Accident investigators said Monday a key landing aid, the Instrument Landing System (ILS), which helps pilots land in bad weather, had been removed from Surat Thani airport six months ago while the runway was being expanded.

The airport had been using radio communications to assist landings in the interim but that system requires better visibility to be effective.

Survivors said the pilot had complained that visibility was poor and had made three separate attempts to land.

Saard Sattasorn, executive vice president of Thai Airways, said several landing attempts were permissi-

ble under international standards.

"More than two approaches can be made, but only if there is an indication that the conditions have considerably improved, giving greater probability of a successful landing," he said.

"But whether or not the pilot saw a chance of a successful landing or why he made a decision for the third approach, we won't be able to find out until the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder are decoded," he said.

Thai officials said Monday the "black boxes", which have been recovered, would be sent to Canada or the Netherlands for decoding.

Thai Airways executives said the company had a fairly good safety record with only two fatal accidents. In July 1992, a Thai Airways Airbus A310-300 crashed into a Himalayan ridge attempting to land at Kathmandu, Nepal.

Another company, Thai Airways Co., with which Thai Airways International merged in 1988, had three fatal crashes on Thai domestic routes in the 1980s.

Thammoo denied a local media report that the company would not pay \$100,000 to relatives of the dead as it had promised.

"We stand by our earlier statement. Thai Airways International will pay relatives of those who died in the crash at least \$100,000 in compensation," he said.



A policewoman scuffles with a female student outside Jakarta's police headquarters during a protest. Hundreds of students, most of them girls, protested for an end to sexual harassment and violence (Reuters photo)

Indonesian police rough up women demonstrators

JAKARTA (AFP) — Hundreds of police dragged dozens of women demonstrators into the Jakarta police headquarters Tuesday as several student groups again hit the streets, witnesses said.

Three busloads of women students from the City Forum (Forkot) had just arrived in front of the police headquarters when hundreds of officers came out and dragged the students from their buses and into the compound.

Some of the reporters covering the demonstration were also hauled in before their press identification was checked.

About 80 women protesters were still detained inside the headquarters an hour later.

"They are not arrested but their identities will be taken down," an officer at the Jakarta Police information department said, declining to elaborate.

The Jakarta police spokesman could not be

immediately reached for comment.

Under a new law passed in October, demonstrators are obliged to notify the police three days before holding a street protest. It was believed that the Forkot protesters did not report their planned demonstration to the police.

Meanwhile, more than 100 students from the Pancasila private university were locked in a "singing" standoff with police when their march towards the national parliament was blocked by a thick cordon of police and soldiers under an overpass some 200 metres away from the legislative compound.

The students sat on the street and sang university and patriotic songs.

But their voices were later drowned out by the security personnel, who along with fresh reinforcements, sang military marching songs at the top

of their lungs, an AFP photographer said.

Six buses carrying students from the Gunadarma private university were also blocked by a phalanx of police and troops as they attempted to approach the parliament from the opposite direction.

Their buses were halted on the tollway in front of the parliament, separated by a high wire fence from the road that passes in front of the complex.

The Forkot women students had left the private Christian University of Indonesia and had intended to protest the arrest of two of their colleagues last week on suspicion of abducting a police intelligence officer during a demonstration not far from the headquarters.

They had also said they planned to continue their protest at the national parliament, some 400 metres further down the same road.

Guatemalan Nobel winner's story challenged

NEW YORK (AP) — A new book by an American anthropologist claims key details of an autobiography written by Rigoberta Menchu, the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner, are untrue, The New York Times reported Tuesday.

"I, Rigoberta Menchu," first published in 1983, describes the author's painful history growing up as an uneducated and oppressed member of the Quiche people in Guatemala.

Menchu became an internationally acclaimed spokeswoman for the rights of indigenous peoples, based largely on the best-selling account. But anthropologist David Stoll concludes that Menchu's book "cannot be the eyewitness account it purports

to be" because she repeatedly describes "experiences she never had herself."

Stoll's book, "Rigoberta Menchu and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans," is based on archival research and nearly a decade of interviews with more than 120 people, the newspaper said.

In September, Menchu refused to address Stoll's criticisms, dismissing them as part of a racist political agenda intended to gain publicity.

A reporter from the Times, using contacts provided by Stoll as well as others found independently, also conducted interviews in Guatemala that contradicted Menchu's account, the newspaper said.

Some of Menchu's relatives,

neighbours, friends and former classmates said main episodes of her book had been fabricated or exaggerated.

A land dispute, central to the book, was a family quarrel, they said, not a fight against rich landowners of European descent. A younger brother who Menchu said starved to death never existed, they said. And Menchu, who claimed she never went to school, attended two private boarding schools on scholarships, they said.

Geir Lundestad, director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute, told the Times that he was aware of Stoll's work, but "there is no question of revoking the prize." He said the award was not based exclusively on the book.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Holbrooke returns to Kosovo

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke arrived here Tuesday as fresh violence threatened the ceasefire in Kosovo that he brokered in October. Holbrooke arrived in Kosovo's capital around 11:30 a.m. (1030 GMT), a U.S. official told AFP. He was to go later in the day to Belgrade for talks with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. Holbrooke's snap visit comes amid a dramatic upsurge in violence in Kosovo, a Serbian province where rebels are fighting for independence for its ethnic Albanian majority. At least 30 members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were killed Monday by border guards as they tried to cross into Kosovo from Albania under cover of night. Serbian officials said. Later Monday, six Serbs were killed when a masked gunman sprayed automatic gunfire inside a cafe in the western Kosovo town of Pec. Serbian sources and international ceasefire monitors said. Holbrooke, President Bill Clinton's nominee as the next U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, brokered a ceasefire in October that ended eight months of fighting between Serbian security forces and KLA guerrillas.

Alatas says reports of heart attack exaggerated

HANOI (AP) — Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said Tuesday that reports he had suffered a heart attack were exaggerated. Alatas was hospitalised overnight Sunday while attending meetings in advance of the Association of South East Asian Nations summit. The hospitalisation sparked rumours that Alatas, who has had heart bypass surgery in the past, had suffered a heart attack. "That was a bit exaggerated," Alatas said as he emerged from the first day of summit talks, looking a bit pale but otherwise healthy. "I was going for a checkup and everything is fine. Thank God," Indonesian officials earlier said that Alatas was feeling tired when he was admitted Sunday to Vietnam International Hospital. He was released the next morning.

Sri Lanka appoints new military chief

COLOMBO (AP) — A general who commanded the Sri Lankan troops in the recent bloody offensive to capture a strategic highway was Tuesday named the new army chief. Lt. Gen. Siril Weerasooriya, 52, will succeed Lt. Gen. Rohan Daluwatte Wednesday, said a statement by the information department of the government. Daluwatte is retiring from service. Weerasooriya's appointment comes two weeks after the government called off the 19-month-old offensive that failed to capture the highway in the northern war zone. The bloody offensive in recent years cost 6,000 lives. The government troops wrested control from the rebels of a 40-kilometre stretch of the 70-kilometre highway, the only land route linking government-controlled Jaffna Peninsula with the mainland. The military admitted losing more than 2,500 soldiers in "Operation Certain Victory," which started on May 13, 1997. The government claimed to have killed at least 3,500 guerrillas fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils. Government forces wrested Jaffna, the Tamil heartland, from the rebels in May 1996, but they have been using the air force and the navy to carry supplies for 500,000 Tamil residents. Repeated attacks by the Tamil guerrillas caused heavy military casualties and brought the fighting to a standstill. The minority Tamils say they are widely discriminated in education and jobs by the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and military. More than 56,000 people have been killed in the war since 1983.

Cambodian hostages released after eight-day ordeal

SYDNEY (AFP) — Three aid workers kidnapped in northwestern Cambodia eight days ago were released Tuesday, aid agency CARE Australia said. The Cambodian CARE employees were in reasonable health, although in shock, said CARE Cambodia director Neil Hawkins in a statement received here. "I believe our staff were only released as a result of intense pressure brought to bear by the Cambodian government," he added. CARE chief executive Charles Trapp said no ransom money was paid. "We have tried to keep details of the abduction as low key as possible over recent days so as not to jeopardise negotiations," he said. "The safety of our staff has been our top priority." The health workers, two women and a man, were seized while doing their rounds in remote villages in Banteay Meanchey province on Dec. 7. Officials said they were kidnapped by guerrillas from the fragmented Khmer Rouge rebel movement.

Bomb explodes in minister's house in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A bomb exploded Tuesday at the house of a government minister representing an area torn by Maoist insurgency, but no one was injured, police said. Land Reforms Minister Chiranjivi Wagle was not at home when the bomb exploded, knocking down the boundary wall and shattering windows. Police said the bomb was detonated by a timing device. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blast. Police have circulated a sketch of a youth seen in the area Monday night. Wagle was elected from Gorkha, a district hit by a three-year-old Maoist insurgency that has claimed nearly 400 lives. The rebels oppose Nepal's constitutional monarchy and want Nepal to be turned into a republic state.

6 dead from cold in Moscow over the weekend

MOSCOW (AP) — Six people died of hypothermia over the weekend in Moscow, as temperatures dipped to minus 15 Celsius, a news report said Tuesday. The most recent deaths brought the total number of people killed from the cold this winter in Moscow to 57, according to the Interfax news agency. Homeless people make up the majority of those who freeze to death from the cold in Moscow. They either fall asleep or pass out from drinking before finding shelter, officials say.

16 killed in Nepal bus accident

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A bus rolled off a highway in a mountainous eastern Nepal region Tuesday, killing at least 16 passengers, police said. Sixty passengers were aboard the bus when it rolled off the highway near Kolbung Village, 260 kilometres southeast of Kathmandu, Nepal's capital. The bus plunged about 150 metres down the mountain. Details of the accident were sketchy.

Congolese rebels say they killed 2 Zimbabwean commanders

KIGALI, Rwanda (AP) — Congolese rebels and their Rwandan allies Tuesday said they had dealt a major blow to government efforts to recapture southeastern Congo when they killed two senior Zimbabwean commanders and captured a gunnery sergeant.

State-run Radio Rwanda said Zimbabwe, the main ally of Congolese President Laurent Kabila, lost operations commander Col. Kufa and squadron commander Lt. Col. Herbert Funi Fudler when Congolese government forces and their allies Monday tried to retake Kabalo, a rebel-held Congo River port, 1,000 kilometres southeast of the capital, Kinshasa.

A Zimbabwean gunner identified as Sgt. Edison was taken prisoner, the radio said. The colonel and sergeant were identified by only one name.

The radio said two helicopter gunships and tanks were destroyed during a five-hour government assault across the Nzofu Bridge, which guards entrance to Kabalo, 14 kilometres from the town.

Monday, rebel leader Ernest Wamba dia Wamba said one Zimbabwean MIG-21 fighter jet and a helicopter gunship had been downed. He later changed this to two helicopters destroyed.

There was no independent confirmation of the rebel claims.

In Zimbabwe, military officials reported losing one helicopter gunship and an unspecified number of

troops in fighting for Kabalo, a staging point for the rebel advance into mineral-rich Katanga Province and the diamond centre of Mbuji-Mayi in neighbouring Eastern Kasai Province.

The rebel coalition of ethnic Congolese Tutsis, disaffected soldiers and opposition politicians took up arms Aug. 2 against Kabila, accusing him of misrule, corruption and ethnic warring.

Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad have sent troops and arms to support Kabila. So far, their counteroffensive has slowed down but not stopped the rebels, who are backed by Rwanda and Uganda.

International efforts to broker a cease-fire have failed over Kabila's persistent refusal to negotiate directly with the rebels, whom he accuses of being the puppets of Rwanda and Uganda.

Tuesday, Rwandan officials said they will participate in another round of talks on the Congo situation sponsored by the Organisation of African Unity Thursday and Friday in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, but said they expected no results.

It was not clear whether rebel representatives have been invited.

In an apparent lead-in to the Ouagadougou meeting, Congolese Ambassador Kyungu Wa-Ku Mwanza told reporters in Nairobi, Kenya Tuesday that the rebels were nothing more than a front for a Rwandan

Tutsi plan to take over central and eastern Africa.

"The Tutsis believe that, like Hitler's dream in 1940, they can dominate Central and East Africa. They are encouraged by the Americans," he said. "The Congolese people are not stupid ... there is already an anti-American feeling in Congo."

Tutsis are a minority in Rwanda but control the government and the army since Tutsi rebels overthrew the majority Hutu government in July 1994, putting an end to the government-orchestrated slaughter of more than half a million Tutsis.

Rwanda and Uganda say they are backing the rebels to protect their western border areas from attacks by Rwandan and Ugandan rebels allowed by Kabila to set up bases inside eastern Congo.

Meanwhile, Angolan troops who helped fend off Congolese rebel attacks on Kinshasa in August were continuing to withdraw from the Atlantic seaboard at Kitona and from Mbuji-Mayi, said Rwandan sources, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The pullout of at least 1,000 Angolans was apparently in response to attacks by UNITA rebels on the government-held towns of Cuito and Huambo in the central Angolan highlands.

The redeployment of Angolan troops to the home front could seriously undermine Kinshasa's efforts to keep up the pressure on the Congolese rebels.

Giant salamanders stolen from Chinese zoo

BEIJING (AFP) — Sixteen giant salamanders have been stolen from a Chinese zoo, possibly by individuals trying to keep up with the "fashion of keeping pets," Xinhua reported Tuesday.

An official from the Chongqing Zoo in southwestern China said the salamanders, which are protected by the state, live in warm

water and expressed concerns about their chances of survival in the chilly Chongqing winter.

Law enforcement officials claimed the thieves, who left only one salamander behind, scaled a two metre high wall around the salamander hall and pried open the gate.

The report said eight cases

of theft of rare birds and animals have occurred at the zoo this year and quoted analysts as saying the trend was related to "local people's taste for wild animals and the fashion of keeping pets."

Police have set up two hotlines in hopes of tracking down the slippery amphibians, the report said.

World
Bosnia
meetin
refugee

MADRID (AP) — The Spanish government has announced that it will send a delegation to Bosnia to meet with the Bosnian Serb leadership. The delegation will be led by the Spanish Foreign Minister, Carlos Mazo. The meeting is expected to take place in the near future.

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Bosnia peace meeting on refugees opens

MADRID (AFP) — An international conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina opened here Tuesday to discuss the return of refugees, post-war reconstruction and the future of the disputed Serb-held town of Brcko.

The two-day meeting — the fourth annual conference on implementing the Dayton peace agreement — gathers 43 countries and 13 international organisations, including the international community's civilian High Representative Carlos Westendorp and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana.

The participants will, behind closed doors, review the progress made since the signing of the Dayton accord in November 1995, which ended three years of war in the former Yugoslav republic.

Westendorp said Friday that returning the refugees to their homes should be a priority in 1999, as little progress had been made this year.

According to international organisations, 1.2 million Bosnians who fled to escape the 1992-95 fighting between Croat, Muslim and Serb forces are still abroad.

Only half a million have returned since the war ended, 100,000 of them this year, less than half the planned number.

Just 30,000 have returned to their homes in areas controlled by a different ethnic group.

Westendorp hopes the figure for returns will double, or even triple, next year.

Wednesday, the conference will discuss the role of the police, security issues, reconstruction and political reforms.

Also on the agenda will be the disputed town of Brcko, taken over by the Serbs at the start of the conflict. The town is currently under Serbian administration with international supervision, pending a ruling expected early next year.

On the economic front, the international community hopes gradually to reduce its financing of the country and encourage self-sufficiency.

At the last such meeting in Bonn a year ago, Westendorp was given the authority to get rid of officials opposed to the peace process and to impose laws on all communities there.



NATO's Secretary-General Javier Solana (left) greets United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata before the start of an international conference on Bosnia. More than 50 countries opened talks aimed at shoring up the Bosnian peace process, but the meeting was expected to be overshadowed by a fresh outbreak of violence in Serbia's troubled Kosovo province (Reuters photo)

Guinea Bissau rivals meet with Togo, Nigeria heads of state

LOME, Togo (AP) — The president and the rebel leader of Guinea-Bissau have agreed on the composition of a government of national unity, Togolese officials said Tuesday.

President Joao Bernardo Vieira and rebel leader Ansumane Mane met late into the night Monday with Togolese President Gnassingbe Eyadema and Nigerian head of state Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, discussing the formation of their new government.

All the posts were not announced but Mane would be made minister of defence and security, Togolese Foreign Ministry officials confirmed.

Vieira and Mane began the talks separately but eventually met together, the officials said on condition of anonymity.

The leaders also discussed planning for general elections, which are to be held in March, and the deployment of West African peacekeepers to Guinea-Bissau.

Those peacekeepers will replace troops from Senegal and Guinea, which sent troops to the small West African country and former Portuguese colony in June to help Vieira contain a military rebellion led by Mane.

About half of Guinea-Bissau's 1 million inhabitants were displaced by the fighting triggered by the rebellion that ended in November when Vieira and Mane agreed to cease hostilities and form a government of national unity.

Both sides have agreed that rebel leader Francisco Fadul will be the new prime minister.

Civil war broke out June 7 when disenchanted colonial war veterans rebelled against Vieira's allegedly corrupt regime.

Under the peace agreement, presidential elections are to be held by March.

At Anwar's trial, court hears of HIV testing

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian prosecutors hauled a queen-sized mattress with suspected semen stains into the courtroom Tuesday in a new twist in the trial of ousted Deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim.

In another development, a police officer admitted Anwar gave his consent to be tested for HIV after his arrest, but he did not give approval for DNA testing to see if he had fathered an illegitimate child.

As the mattress was brought into the courtroom, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string, Anwar turned around and smiled at his family members.

Police said they seized the mattress from an apartment owned by a company affiliated with Anwar's tennis partner as part of their probe into allegations that he had sex with the wife of his private secretary and fathered her child.

Prosecutor Azhar Muhammad asked senior police officer Musa Hassan to remove the brown paper and describe what he saw.

Musa, deputy chief of the Malaysian's police force's criminal investigation department, noted that the mattress had been cut in several places.

"This is the mattress I saw on July 10 with suspected seminal fluid stains. The stains were in the places which have been cut," he told the court.

Anwar, fired in early September and arrested 18 days later, is being tried on four corruption charges related to allegations that he used his position to cover up claims of sexual misconduct. He faces another corruption charge and five charges of sodomy, a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of 20 years.

During the afternoon hearing, Musa admitted Anwar gave his consent for a blood test while he was in police detention.

"It was taken for a HIV test," the police officer said. But he added it was also "used for other purposes", namely a DNA test to determine who fathered the child of his private secretary.

"He did not give his consent for the DNA test," he said.

Musa told the court Tuesday that Anwar's blood sample was sent for DNA tests last Wednesday.

During cross examination of Musa Tuesday, defence counsel Christopher Fernando accused the police of torturing one of Anwar's acquaintances to fabricate evidence of sodomy.

Musa agreed with Fernando's assertion that Pakistani biologist and Islamic scholar Munawar Anes had alleged he was "subjected to torture and forced to fabricate evidence against Anwar."

Munawar, a former speechwriter, was arrested in early September and convicted of sodomy with Anwar during a brief trial on Sept. 19, a day before Anwar was arrested.

He is now serving a six-month sentence along with Anwar's adopted brother Sukma, who was convicted on similar charges on the same day.

When the defence counsel asked the witness if it was true that

Munawar said he "never had homosexual relations with Anwar", judge Augustine Paul intervened, saying such questions were an "absolute waste of time."

Fernando replied the defence wanted to show that Munawar "was tortured by police to fabricate evidence that Anwar had sodomised him."

Musa eventually agreed Munawar had made such allegations. Fernando then asked the witness who provided Munawar with a lawyer when he was charged on Sept. 19 but Justice Paul disallowed the question.

At this point, chief defence counsel Raja Aziz Addruse stood up to explain that the defence was trying to prove bad faith on the part of the police.

But justice Paul said such allegations would have to be supported by affidavits, standing by his ruling Monday that questions relating to police brutality would be overruled unless they were deemed relevant.

Cambodian dissident denies incitement accusations

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodian dissident and former MP Kem Sokha made a brief court appearance here Tuesday to deny accusations he incited violence during street protests following disputed July elections.

The former chairman of the parliamentary human rights committee emerged from weeks of hiding to face a packed courthouse and deny he played any central role in September's turbulent demonstrations against strongman Hun Sen.

"I was not the leader of the demonstrators at that time," Kem Sokha told reporters after the court session, held so that state prosecutors investigating government officials can decide whether to level formal charges against him.

"I have never committed any crime or incited demonstrators to use violence, nor have they proof to charge me."

"Everybody knows that the demonstration was organised by the Sam Rainsy and FUNCINPEC parties," he added, referring to Hun Sen's main political opponents at the time and asserting he was present only as an observer.

Kem Sokha was formally accused by the police and interior ministry of inciting violence following July's elections narrowly won by Hun Sen. The protesters alleged the polls were rigged and called on Hun Sen to step down.

The dissident went into hiding when a travel ban was imposed on opposition officials linked to the protests, and his lack of parliamentary immunity leaves him shuttling from one safe house to another while prosecutors decide whether to level charges.

However, insiders say under the terms of a coalition pact between Hun Sen and FUNCINPEC chief Prince Norodom Ranariddh, charges against Kem Sokha will not be made if he formally answers the accusations in court.

Following the court appearance Kem Sokha said he formally requested the accusations be withdrawn, and described the atmosphere in the court as "good."

Sam Rainsy and Prince Ranariddh-led protests brought the capital to a near-standstill in September, with running battles between police, demonstrators and vigilante mobs claiming at least ten lives.

U.S. warns citizens to be cautious in Kenya

NAIROBI (AFP) — The United States has warned its citizens to "exercise caution" in southern Kenya between the resort island of Lamu and the Somali border, the U.S. embassy in Nairobi reported Tuesday.

The announcement said that on Nov. 19, armed bandits specifically targeted Americans in an attack on the coast north of Lamu.

"There are no indications at this time of a security threat to the immediate Lamu area," it said.

U.S. embassy spokesman Chris Scharf told AFP that credible witnesses had reported that more than a dozen gunmen had robbed guests at a luxury resort on the coast on Nov. 19, and asked whether any Americans were among them.

"There were no Americans there," he said. "They didn't describe what would have taken place, but I'm sure it would have been unpleasant."

The attackers were described as Somalis, either Kenyan citizens of Somali ancestry or from across the border, Scharf said, adding: "We were lucky there were no citizens there. The Somalis are known for holding hostages for ransom."

Two employees of the hotel were assaulted when they tried to resist, he said, but the guests were unharmed.

Lamu is approximately three-quarters of the way up the Indian Ocean coast between the Kenyan port city of Mombasa and the Somali border.

The privately owned KTN television station suggested a possible connection between the advisory and the Aug. 7 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, but Scharf said there was no information suggesting any linkage, apart from geography.

"It was strictly coincidental," he said.

The powerful car-bomb killed 213 people in the Kenyan capital, including 12 Americans, and injured some 5,000, while a virtually simultaneous bomb at the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, the capital of neighbouring Tanzania, left 11 dead and 72 injured.

The television station noted that one of the prime suspects, Mohammad Saddiq Howaidda, who was extradited to the United States and charged with murder, had been living in the area.

Howaidda, a Palestinian, married a Kenyan woman in Malindi, south of Lamu, in 1994.

KTN also noted that special branch police had recently re-arrested two alleged associates of Howaidda in Lamu.

Attacks on tourists are a major concern to Kenyan authorities, who fear they will deter visitors.

In the most recent publicised attack, masked gunmen held up two tourist buses Thursday near the southwestern Maasai Mara game reserve, robbing their occupants of passports, money, binoculars and cameras.

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Le MERIDIEN AMMAN

There's no bossing a democracy

By Deborah Sontag

LEANING FORWARD on a lectern, a brilliant smile on his moustachioed face, Husam Khader chose to make a pointed political joke during a recent meeting of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Khader, a legislator from Nablus, expatiated by the council's impotence, proposed a bill.

"Why don't we declare Yasser Arafat the god of Palestine?" he suggested, referring to the president of the Palestinian National Authority.

The moment spoke volumes about how far Palestinian society has come in the last five years and how far it has to go. On the one hand, Khader was speaking from the floor of the democratically elected legislature, engaging in debate that allows for barbed humour aimed at the Palestinian leader. On the other, his words conveyed a central frustration for those involved in the building of the Palestinian state: Arafat's vice-like grip on the reins of power.

"I think we have a serious, deep yearning for democracy," said Eyad Sarraj, who runs the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, a non-governmental organisation. "The problem is that Arafat is untouchable. He is a holy symbol, while right now we could use a mere mortal."

Still, an interesting thing has happened on the way to statehood, a journey that for many Palestinians crosses a major threshold with the visit of President Clinton to Gaza. As the Israelis have come to realise with great alarm, the Palestinians have viewed Clinton's visit, with the fight into the new Yasser Arafat International Airport as a diplomatic endorsement of their aspirations.

Despite Arafat's best efforts to suppress them, the fledgling institutions of democracy, some mandated by international agreements, have taken on a life of their own. And this has significantly altered the mind-set of a clan-based society that lived under occupation for 50 years.

After 1993, when the interim peace accord was reached in Oslo, many symbols of sovereignty emerged: Palestinian flags, Palestinian licence plates, Palestinian passports (accepted by 80 countries), Palestinian Coca Cola and, two weeks ago, the new airport in Gaza.

The chaos that had reigned, particularly during the seven years of Palestinian uprising, began to recede. Schools and hospitals were refreshed, restocked and operated continuously. Traffic policemen appeared at busy intersections, roads were paved and telephone lines run into villages. A nightlife sprang up in Ramallah, and in Nablus, a fledgling Palestinian stock market.

But most important, perhaps, were the new democratic institutions: the PLC and the Palestinian supreme court, both stipulated by the Oslo accords, and a burgeoning, quickly ubiquitous press corps, together with a host of dissident weeklies.

The very fact of these institutions cre-

ated an appetite for authenticity on the part of some of the legislators, justices and journalists who participated in them. There were sharp divisions between those who had grown up under Israeli occupation, observing the model of Israeli democracy, and those who had only recently returned from exile in the more autocratic Arab nations. But those who craved authentic institutions wanted what amounted to too much too soon, or sooner than Arafat was prepared to allow it.

"We were ready for democracy," said Rawiya Shawwa, a legislator from Gaza and an outspoken columnist for the newspaper Al Quds. "Our struggle for independence was built on coalitions. We made decisions by voting. And we had this neighbour, our occupier, with a democratic lifestyle. We experienced their demonstrations, and their media, and their freedom of saying."

But the appetite for authenticity went largely unfulfilled. The legislators passed many laws that were not implemented; the judges issued many court orders that were ignored; the journalists either censored themselves, faced rebuke and arrest, or found their newspapers closed.

At the same time, Arafat gave much power to the half-dozen security organisations he created like a small army around himself.

After Khader proposed his bill to defy Arafat, several legislators and journalists laughed aloud, and some started ahead with widened eyes. One representative jumped him, demanding an apology, and Khader sardonically congratulated his beefy attacker, saying that Arafat would witness his loyalty while reviewing the videotapes of the meeting. The entire incident was expunged from the minutes.

"I don't want to trick myself into thinking that we have institutions, laws and rules," Khader said. "It's tempting. We go through the motions. We argue, we bargain. We have procedures and votes and lobbyists of a kind. Yes, the council dances beautifully. But in the dark."

Still, the Palestinians, with a relatively sizeable intellectual elite, international help and the model of Israel, have moved more quickly and closer towards developing democratic institutions than any of their Arab neighbours, experts say.

"It's very exciting to see," said Joseph Alpher, director of the American Jewish Committee in Israel. "What they have done in the last five years is more democratic than any Arab society. It's a limited democracy, or guided democracy, under the very firm hand of Arafat. But it has potential."

Fayez Nouraldin, a Gaza-based photographer for Agency France-Presse, hit one of the first bumps on the road to the limited democracy. During a heat wave two years ago, he took a picture of children trying to drag their donkey into the ocean for a bath. The photograph ran in publications around the world. Palestinian officials were furious. They thought he was trying to make the Palestinians look asinine, literally. He was arrested and roughed up.

But a nascent union of local journalists ran to his defence. High-ranking Palestinian officials released him, apologised and punished the arresting officers. And such ham-handed clamp downs became less frequent, giving way to a more subtle dance between the journalists and the PNA. They have developed a relationship based on the understanding that there are limits to the freedom of expression, but that these limits are constantly shifting.

After the Oslo peace agreement, the news media blossomed in numbers, with two new daily newspapers, a handful of new weeklies, three new radio stations and 15 new television stations. The very act of covering events beside their Israeli and foreign colleagues proved an education, making the Palestinian journalists — already experts at linguistic subterfuge from years of dealing with Israeli military censors — yearn to operate freely.

But the three dailies are tightly controlled, and tend to be timid since they can face censure for such things as burying a small article that reflects well on Arafat. The leading paper is the veteran publication, Al Quds, which is privately owned but closely allied with the Palestinian leadership. And of the two new dailies, one is financed by the PNA, and the other run by an adviser to Arafat.

Still, it can be surprising to see what is tolerated, especially in small weeklies or monthlies.

Recently, a rights group put a paid insert into newspapers about torture in Palestinian prisons, complete with gory photographs — and a government advertising permit.

A monthly magazine, People's Rights, submitted, "Building the rule of law in Palestine," routinely runs harsh articles about corruption and police brutality.

Last week, as Gaza was being scrubbed for Clinton's visit, editors at the major newspapers were snipping criticism from their columns. Yet the paper of the Islamic Holy War movement, Al Istiqlal, printed these words of welcome: "American President Bill Clinton, who is known as Monica's secret lover, is about to visit our noble and beloved Gaza. With his vulgar presence, he will desecrate its pure soil that has been saturated for more than 50 years with the blood of our holy martyrs."

When the mandated elections were held for president and PLC in 1996, some 86 per cent of Palestinian adults turned out to vote. More than half of the 88 council members came from Arafat's Fateh Party, and one of his right-hand men, Ahmad Qureia, or Abu Ala, became speaker of the House. Still, there remained about 29 independent legislators, including some members of Hamas, the Muslim resistance movement. And some Fateh members behaved more independently than their leader liked.

Many of the legislators took their mission quite seriously. In two years they passed about 20 laws, often stopping to research a point of procedure, to inquire how the Israeli parlia-

ment would handle it. It took them almost two years to draft a constitution, gingerly constructing clauses about the protection of civil liberties and human rights. One passage, about the terms of succession for a president who lost the confidence of the council or became incapacitated, was stricken because the legislators were timid.

But only 12 bills were signed by Arafat; the constitution still sits on his desk. A law ordering municipal elections was ignored, as was the one to hold elections for a new legislature at the expiration of its term next May. Few laws have been carried out, but one that will be stands out: a bill to raise the salary of civil servants. Because so many Palestinians are employed by the PNA, it is considered an important step towards raising the standard of living.

Still, by the very nature of their enterprise, the legislators accomplished the critical task of altering the terms of public debate. Some grew more outspoken, especially on the issue of corruption within the PNA. They felt themselves powerless when their demands to weed out corrupt officials were ignored, but if Arafat did not listen, the Palestinian people did, through the media coverage of the legislature. Some felt both informed and emboldened by the public discussion, but others criticised the council for caving in, for acting as a rubber stamp for Arafat.

"People feel they're just there for dec-



In the week leading up to President Clinton's visit most editors in PNA-controlled areas snipped criticism from their columns, yet Al Istiqlal still printed these words of welcome: 'American President Bill Clinton, who is known as Monica's secret lover, is about to visit our noble and beloved Gaza. With his vulgar presence, he will desecrate its pure soil that has been saturated for more than 50 years with the blood of our holy martyrs' (AP photo)

oration," said Sarraj. "There's no separation of powers between the executive, the legislative and judiciary."

Like the legislature, the Palestinian high court tried to shut out the pressure from Arafat and develop a rule of law. But it was impossible. If a judge went too far — as in the case of Amin Abdul Salam, the former chief justice of the West Bank, who demanded the release of some students in detention — he was dismissed. Others resigned.

One Palestinian rights group, which used to monitor Israeli violations, counts 27 ignored court orders. The total issued is unknown.

"If our leaders ignore court orders, then our people will, too," said Samir Muh-sen, a lawyer and journalist, "and before we know it, they'll start taking the law into their own hands. Is that the way we want to inaugurate our Palestinian civil society, with chaos?"

Some of the ignored court orders demand the release of Hamas members who are being detained indefinitely without charges. And that is where the Israeli interest in having Arafat clamp down on terrorism comes into play, countering any encouragement Israel might have offered towards developing democratic institutions in Palestine.

Many Palestinians, even those pushing at the edge of the permissible, accept that it is only after Arafat leaves what appears to be his lifetime office that things will change. And, in a surprising comment in

Ramallah last week, Arafat made that time seem not so far away.

"I don't know if I'll live one year or two years," he said at a meeting with the Washington-based Institute of Near East Policy.

That makes many Palestinians, and some international experts, worry about the fledgling character of the democratic institutions in place.

"Can they handle a transition of power in what are likely to be horrendous circumstances?" said Alpher of the Jewish committee.

Mrs. Shawwa wonders if Palestinian society needs more time to prepare even for statehood, let alone a change of leadership.

"My opinion is maybe we are not ready for a state," she said. "Maybe we should wait until we have genuine institutions."

The freedom with which she speaks can be confusing to those who equate such public conversation with a more mature democracy. But to many it only indicates that Palestinian society is not the monolithic entity usually portrayed to the world.

"As far as the world is concerned, only they — the Israelis — have public opinion," Hanan Ashrawi, a prominent Palestinian and council member, said.

— New York Times

Global Village

Pakistani lovers find life far from romantic

By Owais Tohid
Agence France Presse

HUMAIRA IS in protective custody and her husband is in hiding after they secretly married in defiance of their parents.

"My family will kill me and my husband," said 28-year-old Humaira, daughter of an influential deputy of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League.

"I just want to be with my beloved," she told human rights activists at Dar-ul Aman, a state-run house in Karachi for destitute women, after fleeing central Punjab province last month.

Her brother, accompanied by police, took her from a shelter run by the Edhi Welfare Trust, but following protests by human rights groups she is now under police protection.

"Life is not beautiful for lovers in Pakistan," her husband, Mahmood Butt, told AFP.

"We are meant for each other. How could I live without my love," said Butt, who returned from the United States last year to marry Humaira, which they did in secret in May. The pair had been in

love with each other for seven years.

Her parents opposed the marriage. Humaira having been engaged to a cousin when she was only a child, and they locked her up in their home, human rights activists say.

"Love is not a crime," said Butt. "We are husband and wife but they are not giving us a right to live."

The couple's counsel, Zia Awan, said that under the law the couple could live together, but they fear for their lives.

"We are still living in a tribal and feudal society. Women are a commodity that can be sold, bought or used in the name of respect and honour," Awan said. Activists blamed a rise in Muslim fundamentalism.

"These extremists want to see the women behind closed doors," said Uzma Noorani, a women's rights activist.

Humaira and Butt's story is not new in Pakistan.

In February, 30-year-old Kanwar Ahsan married a Pushtoon girl, Riffat Afridi, defying tribal tradition and ignoring their different ethnic backgrounds.

Their love led to two deaths and a dozen injuries after the enraged Pash-

toon community rampaged in Karachi during a protest strike.

Ahsan was seriously injured in an armed attack by the Afridi tribesmen.

Dubbed Pakistan's "Romeo and Juliet," both are in hiding after the girl's parents ordered their death, a family source said.

"The couple cannot live like free birds," the source said, adding they have been trying to obtain foreign visas so they can quit Pakistan.

Human rights activists said many cases go unreported.

In 1996, runaway lovers Saima Waheed and Arshad won a landmark ruling when the supreme court upheld their marriage without parental consent, overturning an earlier ruling from the Lahore high court that an adult woman needs permission from her male guardian for marriage.

In September last year, Fahimuddin and his wife Hajira were shot and killed in Hyderabad after a court hearing in their love marriage case.

"It is ridiculous and disgusting," Noorani said, but added that society had to be changed if lovers were to be given a chance in Pakistan.

Ancient order of chivalry regains fort

By Christopher Sciduna
Reuters

AN INTERNATIONAL Order of chivalry celebrated its 900th birthday on Saturday on the island where it stopped the Ottoman advance on Europe in 1565.

The Maltese government announced on Friday that as part of the celebrations it would hand back a small fort in the heart of Malta's Valletta Harbour from which French Grand Master Jean de La Valette led his troops to beat off a Turkish siege in 1565.

In returning to its historic seat, the Order announced a major concession to modern times — women, known as dames, will be able to participate in its senior ranks along with the male members, the Knights.

An agreement for the handing over of Fort St. Angelo to the Order will be signed on Saturday after a Mass in Valletta, the Maltese walled capital built by the Order after the Turkish siege and named after La Valette.

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem 11,500 members and 80,000 permanent volunteers from all over the world.

It enjoys diplomatic relations with 81

states. The Order's chancellor (prime minister) told a press conference the order carried out humanitarian work on all continents, running hospitals in turbulent regions such as the Middle East.

The Order's history is rooted in the late 12th century when representatives of the richest families in Europe agreed to protect Christian pilgrims at a time when the Kingdom of Jerusalem, as it was called, had no standing army.

After the fall of Acre, the last Christian stronghold in the Holy Land, the Order moved to Cyprus, from where its ships raided the mainland. A more permanent base was established in Rhodes, but the Order was eventually defeated in a long siege by the Ottomans and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V offered Malta to the Knights for a yearly rent of one falcon.

The Knights took over the tiny island because its magnificent natural harbour offered protection for their fleet. They built huge ramparts and after beating off the Turkish siege of 1565, they built Valletta, decorating it with large palaces and richly decorated churches that are today some of Malta's most important tourist attractions.

Today the former palace of the Grand

Master is the office of the Maltese president and the seat of parliament.

The agreement for the handover of the fort, announced by Maltese Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami on Friday, will allow the order to use the building "for international humanitarian and cultural activities."

Lying at the tip of a peninsula, the fort has remained largely unused since being handed to the Maltese government in 1979 after having been used as a headquarters by Britain's Royal Navy for two centuries.

At the beginning of their celebrations on Saturday the members of the Order walked in procession down Malta's Republic Street, the main road in the Valletta wearing black ceremonial habits emblazoned with the eight pointed Maltese cross which has become known as the Maltese cross.

They were led by the Grand Master, British-born Fra Andrew Bertie, and former Italian President Francesco Cossiga, himself a Knight Grand Cross, one of the highest ranks in the order.

The celebrations will continue this year in Rhodes and culminate in Jerusalem.

The French hairdresser who turned Hillary Clinton into an idol

By Eric Scherer
Agence France Presse

NOT LONG ago, Isabelle Goetz left her small town in eastern France with a hairdressing diploma. Now she travels regularly on Air Force One and parks her Harley-Davidson in the White House.

In one year, Goetz has become indispensable to Hillary Clinton and is widely credited with making the First Lady more radiant and alluring.

"They all want the Hillary look," 27-year-old Goetz said of her other clients in Washington.

Hillary Clinton's transformation is

nothing short of spectacular.

After years of criticism for her severe look and constantly changing style, this month the U.S. president's wife made the cover of Vogue, drawing public admiration like a Hollywood star.

"She wasn't after a special look and we didn't even talk about it. But little by little, I changed her hairstyle until by the present one," Goetz told AFP. Clinton's layered, swept-back hairstyle has become quite popular. "It suits her very well and everybody tells her so," said Goetz.

Newsweek magazine described Clinton as "radiant" and gave the reason for

her transformation: "Isabelle Goetz of DC" (District of Columbia, as the capital is known).

Being beautiful may be the best form of vengeance, said the weekly, referring to President Bill Clinton's daunting legal problems.

The New York Times also traced the secret behind the First Lady's look to her new hairdresser.

"She's naturally elegant and very beautiful, more beautiful than she looks on television," said Goetz, who has been going to the White House four or five times a week for close to a year.

Goetz, who received her hairdressing

diploma in Belfort, began her march to the White House five years ago when, passing through a hair salon in Paris, she came across an ad for a training course in Washington.

Four years later, she was working here for Cristophe, a Washington hair salon run by a friend of the Clintons of Belgian extraction.

In November 1997, she was called to the White House to do Hillary Clinton's hair. "I was intimidated, but after a few months I realised I had become the only (hairdresser)... she really liked the first haircut I gave her."

Since then, Goetz has travelled around the world. Aboard Air Force

One with the Clintons she has visited China, Russia, Africa, Chile and Ireland. She also came to Gaza and Israel.

"The first time, in Africa, I cried. My heart beat wildly. It was all so incredible," she said recalling her first landing with the Clintons and the presidential motorcade making its way through cheering crowds.

Last year, she danced at a White House gala for British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in the company of celebrities like Steven Spielberg, Barbra Streisand and Tom Hanks.

Occasionally, she said, she also touches up the president's hair.

"Both of them are very kind, unaf-

fected, friendly and easy-going people, not at all like your typical cold-hearted politician," Goetz said.

Goetz, who has an American boyfriend and works in the Clintons' private quarters, said she was "easily accepted by the White House entourage." "It's a great honour to do her hair," Goetz said without revealing Hillary Clinton's daily reactions to the ongoing Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Although Goetz is thrilled at having made the First Lady a national idol, she has yet to fulfil her American dream: "Ride my motorcycle across the United States on Route 66."

Pope faults globalisation, urges debt relief

VATICAN CITY (R) — Pope John Paul called Tuesday for a new world vision to deal with the downside of free markets, saying economic globalisation and financial fluctuations had hurt many people.

In a message ahead of the Roman Catholic Church's World Day of Peace, the 78-year-old Pope also repeated an appeal to rich nations to see the year 2000 as an ideal moral opportunity to help developing countries extricate themselves from the quicksand of international debt.

The 20-page message, called "Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace," will be sent to heads of state and international organisations before the World Day of Peace is celebrated on Jan. 1.

The message also deals with issues such as the rights of children, global responsibility for the environment, the plight of the unemployed and the rights of ethnic minorities.

While it repeated the Pope's well-known stands on human rights and his condemnation of practices such as arms trafficking, it also underscored his growing concern for the effects of free-market policies.

"The rapid advance towards globalisation of economic and financial systems also illustrates the urgent need to establish who is responsible for guaranteeing the global common good and the exercise of economic and social rights," the Pope said.

The Pope, who has made human dignity and workers' rights two of the

themes of his 20-year pontificate, said recent economic crises had relegated many people to poverty just as they were glimpsing a better future.

"How can we ignore the effects of fluctuations in the financial markets? We urgently need a new vision of global progress in solidarity, which will include an overall and sustainable development of society, so as to enable all people to realise their potential," he added.

The Pope dedicated a significant part of the section on globalisation to what he called "the frightening problem of the international debt of the poorest nations."

Noting that international bodies had initiated steps to help debt-ridden nations, the Pope appealed to affluent countries to ensure the success of the initiatives.

"An immediate and vigorous effort is needed, as we look to the year 2000, to ensure that the greatest possible number of nations will be able to extricate themselves from a now intolerable situation," he said.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have a joint initiative to help heavily indebted poor countries.

It rewards country debtors with a strong track record of market-friendly economic reforms with some of the most generous debt relief terms the international community has ever offered.

In his message, the Pope also issued a strong defence of the rights of ethnic groups and minorities. Denying their right to exist is one of the most tragic forms of discrimination, he said.

Tunisia to give energy investors incentives

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia, in a move awaited by foreign investors in the energy sector, said this week it would revise its gas pricing system and offer new incentives to oil firms to boost investment.

Industry Minister Moncef Ben Abdallah, who is in charge of the energy sector, said the legislation called Energy Code would be issued early in 1999.

"The Code brings an appreciable improvement in the level of petroleum tax-system and at the level of gas pricing. They will be set up by decree in order to take into account the specifics of the projects and the conditions of the international market," he told a gas seminar.

Energy officials said the current gas pricing formula was governed by a law based on the volatile linkage of gas to the low value high sulphur fuel oil.

They said the revision would scrap the linkage between gas price and fuel oil.

U.K.'s gas firm B.G. PLC last May said it would consider investing up to \$400 million for the development of its new Tunisian gas field Hasdrubal if the revision was made.

Ben Abdallah said the new code would also include easing the procedures as well as shortening administrative deadlines related to granting permits.

Tunisia's proven hydrocarbons reserves are put at 500 million barrels, and gas reserves at 65 billion cubic metres.

Morocco unveils new strategy for jobs

MARRAKESH (R) — Morocco said Monday it had earmarked 750 million dirhams (\$81.5 million) to create jobs and signed several agreements to open schools as part of a new strategy to combat rising unemployment and illiteracy.

"Total financial commitment to fight unemployment is 750 million dirhams from this year's budget," government spokesman Khalid Alioua told reporters at the end of a three-day conference on jobs in the southern Moroccan city of Marrakesh.

He said the government of Socialist Prime Minister Abderrahmane Al Youssefi had also agreed with the World Bank to set up a social fund whose capital would increase to \$100 million before the end of 2000.

But Youssefi said at the conference's closing session that investments which had fallen dramatically this year remained the "real vehicle for development" and vowed to speed up reforms that would include incentives and eliminate red-tape to attract local and foreign investors.

"The new strategy will be characterised by speed and transparency," he said. "We are preparing for the investor whether Moroccan or foreigner, the appropriate climate on all the administrative, legal, financial and incentives fronts."

The North African country of 28 million suffers from one of the world's highest rates of illiteracy, estimated at around 55 per cent and as high as 90 per cent in rural areas with 200,000 children leaving schools annually.

The jobless rate is officially put at around 17 per cent. But labour unions believe the figure

is more than 22 per cent in urban areas and up to 50 per cent in rural areas.

"Unemployment is a major economic and social problem and creating job opportunities... especially for the youth and university graduates should take priority," King Hassan of Morocco said in an opening speech to the conference on Saturday.

The government's efforts to combat the twin problem of jobless and illiteracy received a boost when leading businessman Othman Benjelloun signed an agreement to open 100 schools annually in the poor rural areas.

"This initiative which will also employ hundreds of teachers, is to provoke our partners in the private sector to come out with similar projects," said Benjelloun, president of the Benjelloun Group which owns Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur among others.

"We want the government of alternance (Youssefi's) to succeed. We believe this a patriotic task," he told a news conference after the signing.

Rural areas, long ignored by previous administrations, suffer from poor basic services such as potable water and electricity and Alioua said such projects would have priority.

Alioua, who is also minister of social development, employment and professional training, signed on Monday several agreements with state-run big enterprises and non-government organisations to open educational centres in villages to fight illiteracy, especially among women.

He also said that the government was pursuing a programme to provide on-job training to

some 25,000 graduates every year to prepare them for the job market.

Thousands of jobless try to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe every year seeking a better future. Scores of them have died this year while trying to sneak in

in overcrowded wooden boats, Spanish authorities say.

King Hassan has said only 180,000 of the 230,000 who enter the job market every year could be employed.

"Our task is to meet the annual needs of 230,000

job-seekers who absorb the unemployment who have accumulated over the years," the monarch said. "That is the big challenge to create 255,000 jobs every year."

Exchange Rates		Tuesday, 15-12-98		ACCESS 4848888	
CURRENCY	JORDAN DINA	US DOLLAR	EURO	BAHRAIN DINA	OMAN RIAL
JORDAN DINA	1.0000	0.1886	0.1927	1.8778	1.8390
SAUDI RIAL	5.3023	1.0000	1.0218	9.9568	9.7506
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1853	0.9787	1.0000	9.7446	9.5429
BAHRAIN DINA	0.3325	0.1004	0.1026	1.0000	0.9793
OMAN RIAL	0.5438	0.1026	0.1048	1.0211	1.0000
QATAR RIAL	5.1434	0.9700	0.9912	9.6864	9.4564
KUWAIT DINA	0.4256	0.0803	0.0820	0.7991	0.7826
EGYPT POUND	4.8145	0.0080	0.0278	9.0408	8.8538
LIBANON LIRA	21.4831	0.0517	0.1599	40.3416	39.5065
US DOLLAR	1.4124	1.0000	0.2722	2.6523	2.5974
BRITAIN STERLING	0.5359	0.1577	0.1611	1.5697	1.5372
GERMANY MARK	2.3388	0.4411	0.4507	4.3920	4.3010
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.8901	0.3585	0.3642	3.5493	3.4758
FRANCE FRANC	7.4858	1.4797	1.5119	14.7330	14.4281
JAPAN YEN	1.6547	0.3121	0.3189	3.1072	3.0429
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.6356	0.4971	0.5079	4.9462	4.8465
SWEDEN KRONA	11.3846	2.1471	2.1939	21.3764	20.9356
ITALY LIRA	23.1638	4.3687	4.4638	43.4979	42.5974
BELGIUM FRANC	48.2627	9.1023	9.3005	90.6294	88.7532
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2853	0.4272	0.4365	4.2539	4.1658
GREEK DRACHM	3.9268	0.7406	0.7567	7.3739	7.2213
CYPRUS POUND	2.8936	0.5081	0.5171	5.0394	4.9351
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	16.4548	3.1034	3.1709	30.8994	30.2997
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1780	0.4108	0.4197	4.0899	4.0052
EURO	1.1899	0.2244	0.2293	2.2345	2.1882

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES

DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES		CSJA	
CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M
US DOLLAR	5.0000	4.8700	4.7100
BRITAIN STERLING	6.3400	6.2000	6.0000
FRANCE FRANC	3.1200	3.0600	3.0000
GERMANY MARK	3.2200	3.0900	3.0000
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.2500	1.1675	1.1200
JAPAN YEN	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

CURRENCY	ASK	BID
US DOLLAR	0.7080	0.7100
BRITAIN STERLING	1.1950	1.2010
GERMANY MARK	0.4277	0.4299
SWITZERLAND FRANC	0.3267	0.3280
FRANCE FRANC	0.1275	0.1281
JAPAN YEN	0.0094	0.0094
HOLLAND GUILDER	0.2760	0.2760
ITALY LIRA	0.0432	0.0432
EURO	0.8404	0.8420

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE
FRANKFURT	DAX	4322.88	4336.20	-13.34
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	9835.21	9862.00	-26.79
LONDON	FT-SE 100	5534.20	5541.70	-7.50
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSE	8889.80	8821.76	+68.04
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	854.53	864.81	-10.28
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	647.89	657.78	-9.89
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1114.20	1106.45	+7.75
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	14011.19	14111.62	-100.43
PARIS	CAC 40	3683.21	3695.70	-12.49
FRANKFURT	COMMERZBANK	4254.30	4248.80	+5.50

PRECIOUS METALS

METAL	ASK	BID
GOLD	282.00	282.50
SILVER	4.88	4.90
PLATINUM	348.00	350.00

ASEAN leaders mourn fallen economies, reaffirm free-trade goals

HANOI (AFP) — South East Asian leaders, from countries with shattered economies, promised Tuesday to speed up free-trade reform and boost incentives to foreign investors to position the region for an eventual rebound.

Leaders of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) warned each other against backsliding on commitments to liberalise trade and investment in the face of unprecedented economic stress.

"If we cannot convince the world that we are united in our determination to repair our economies, it could lead the major powers to turn away from South East Asia," Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said.

Goh told the opening of the sixth ASEAN summit

that speeding up the removal of trade barriers within the grouping would be a "powerful signal that we will keep our markets free, that we will remain plugged into the global economy..."

At the Hanoi summit, ASEAN leaders are to consider a blueprint of economic measures to speed up the creation of a free-trade area to 2002 from

2003 and offer perks to foreign investors.

Goh called for liberalisation "beyond the expectation of the market, in financial services, in information technology, in civil aviation..."

Even Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, a fierce critic of perceived abuses in the free-market system, said that Kuala Lumpur remained

committed to closer economic integration and free trade within ASEAN.

"By all counts, the last year or so has been the most difficult and challenging period for all our countries," said Mahathir, who imposed capital controls in September to shield the Malaysian currency from speculative pressure after

(Continued on page 9)

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

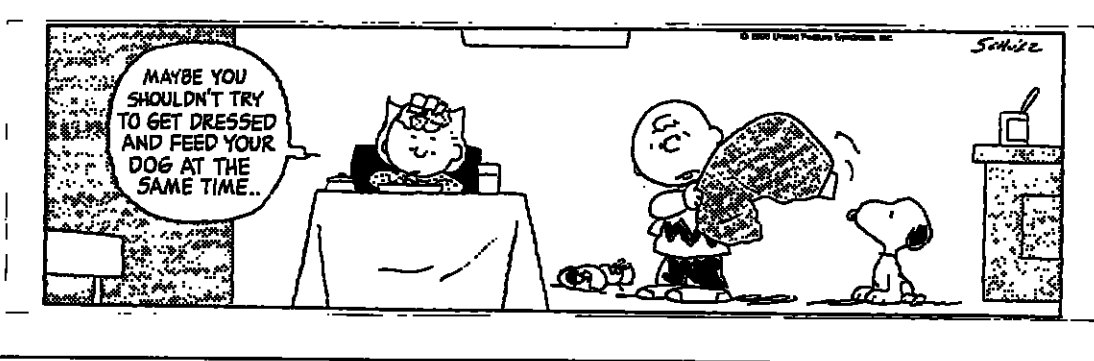
ACROSS

- Curving courses
- Selling point
- Feed, as hogs
- Checked garment
- Spicy dish
- Soccer great
- Country
- Scorsese film of 1976
- Surpasses
- Played (with)
- Simian
- Wager
- Ground-cover herb
- Likely to be bought
- Yes or no
- Transfer
- Mosaic piece
- 16 make a pound
- Hockey great
- Brouhaha
- Romaine
- St. cresser
- Zodiac sign
- Presently
- Fuel ingredient
- Turn on a pivot
- Chic
- Type of phone
- 19th President
- Coop resident
- Turndown vote
- Enrage
- Quarterback, at times
- Steinbeck novel, with "The"
- Residence
- Location
- Nine entrances
- Novelist
- Bagnoil
- Contradict
- Aspect
- Some NOOs

DOWN

- Land measure
- Thickening sauce
- Scat singer of note
- Tapering tower
- Play parts
- Na Na
- Sweet birthday
- "The Wasteland"
- Neat
- Archbird
- "My Name Is Asher"
- Corrida shout
- Part of mph
- Alter text
- Poetic pasture
- Turn red
- Judy Garland hit, with "The"
- Night-blooming cactus
- Edible
- submarines
- Stop flow of, as blood
- Phantoms
- Loat
- Cut off
- Secular law
- Small plane
- Bitter in tone
- Cuts to ribbons
- St. Lawrence, e.g.
- Genetic stuff
- Gossip maven
- Hopper
- Steffi of tennis
- Attention-getting sound
- Give off
- Crimson and scarlet
- Roll of paper money
- "We the People"
- Desire
- Western Indian

Peanuts



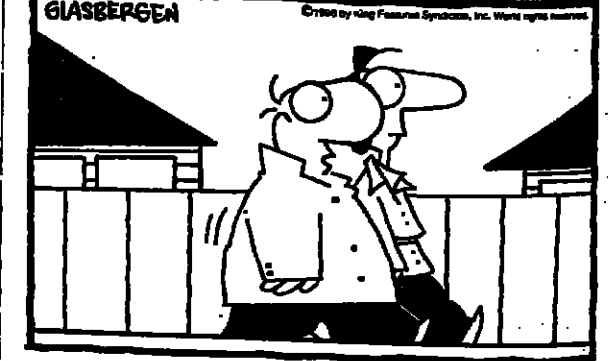
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SIVOR

GULEN

GONNIG

NAUCIV

Answer: GUMMI, KHAKI, BANISH, SKEWER

Yesterday's Jumbles: GUMMI, KHAKI, BANISH, SKEWER

Answer: What the school coach gave the pole vaulter — "HIGH" MARKS

Busin

A review

Compreh

procedure.

Government

sectors to

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Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Comprehensive review of investment procedures to be conducted in early '99

**** THE GOVERNMENT** intends to conduct a comprehensive review at the beginning of next year on the best means to encourage investments. Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh announced during a meeting of the Higher Council for Investment. The review will be carried out with representatives of the private sector and the presidents and members of the financial committees of both houses of Parliament, said Tarawneh who presided over the meeting.

The prime minister did not rule out the possibility that the review would include specific amendments on the Investment Promotion Law in order to simplify and facilitate the procedures for investments. Tarawneh asked the ministers and private sector representatives, who are members of the Higher Council, to formulate a comprehensive concept in order to activate the role of Higher Council and bolster investments. He emphasised the determination of the government to consolidate the effectiveness of tax and customs incentives given to investment projects by simplifying the procedures through which the projects pass.

Tarawneh expressed dissatisfaction about the complexities which many investors still complain of despite the increase in the volume of investments during 1998 compared to last year. From the beginning of this year until 11/11/1998 investments totalled about JD460 million, JD80 million more than the JD380 million posted in 1997.

Industry and Trade Minister Mohammad Saleh Hourani told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, and Jordan Television that the Higher Council reviewed all investment-related issues and discussed the hurdles hindering this sector in order to work for solutions and to promote investment for Jordan and lure capital. Hourani, who is also the vice president of the Higher Council, said the study which was prepared by some consultants about the investment hurdles was reviewed to pinpoint the measures that should be taken by government to make the Investment Promotion Corporation more capable and effective to promote and attract investments to the Kingdom.

The minister indicated that the Higher Council would continue its meetings during the Holy Month of Ramadan noting that the recommendations of the Higher Council will be presented to the Council of Ministers in one package to take the suitable decisions (Al Aswak).

Government studying new economic sectors to improve their competitiveness

**** AFTER EXECUTING** six studies on the Jordanian textiles, Dead Sea projects, tourism, pharmaceuticals, mining and cement, the "national competitiveness team" is conducting studies on new economic sectors, namely banking, higher education, construction and Jordanian expatriates. Yusef Mansur, the head of the team studying the competitiveness of Jordan indicated that the selection of these sectors was taken because of their importance to the industrial sector. "Developing these sectors will consolidate the competitiveness of the Jordanian economy in general," he stressed.

Mansur said the study emphasised the importance of raising the quality level as it is considered among the important pillars of competitive capability. Also of importance are the encouragement of research and development and the due attention to marketing and promotion to enable the industries penetrate new markets abroad.

The possibility of enabling the banking sector in Jordan serve the local industry in a better way will also be studied, Mansur said. He pointed out that most of the difficulties facing the Kingdom's industry were in not being able to secure the necessary and suitable financing for expansion (Al Dus-tour).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1998

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It's a fabulous day to travel, ask questions and talk to God. Don't worry, you don't have to travel all the way to heaven to do that. But if you do get a chance to travel, you've got it made.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The sun, moon, Pluto and Mercury are all in Sagittarius. That's in your solar eighth, house of money, specifically money you share with others. This includes legacies and gifts. You'll be finding all sorts of surprises and buried treasures.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Somebody is encouraging you to do something you thought you couldn't do. No point trying to resist. It's much bigger than you are. You're being encouraged to rejoice, participate, have fun and look at everybody as your friend. You do that anyway, but today, you might even like people you can't stand. Have a great time.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You've had a couple days to spend on love; now let's devote a little attention to money. You do that by working for it, and there's plenty of work to do. You're being watched, and if you perform brilliantly, you're in line for a promotion.

LEO: (July 23 to August 23) The sun and moon are both in Sagittarius, one of the most inspirational signs in the zodiac for you. It lights you up and gets you going. You're coming up with new ideas, and you want to jump right up and put them into action. Projects begun today or tomorrow or even Friday should turn out to surpass your wildest expectations.

VIRGO: (August 24 to September 23) There are surprises and problems to be solved at your house. There might even be messes to be cleaned up and stuff to be thrown out. Some kind of transformation going on, that's for sure, but not to worry. Love is on your side and that's the most important thing. With that, you know everything's going to turn out well.

LIBRA: (September 24 to October 23) There's

at least one interesting lesson to learn today, so watch for it. An older friend is the likely tutor, but the lesson may not be obvious. Find somebody who knows how to do something you admire follow that person around and mimic him or her, and voila! Pretty soon you're able to master this difficult subject yourself.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You're shrewd, as usual, but you're losing your grip. There's something you want that you probably can't afford. You'd really like a justification to get it. If you can figure out a way to get what you want and make it deductible, as in part of your job or career, maybe you can make it happen. That's the challenge today.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You'll be coming up with so many good ideas, you won't even be able to count them all. You'll have to make lists, but on the run, because you're too busy to settle in one place for long. Everyone wants you at their parties. Everyone is asking your advice.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) You see yourself a certain way, but how you see yourself and how others see you may be quite different. How you see yourself and how you'd like to be could be quite different, too.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Your friends are important to you, today more than ever. They could help you come up with some great ideas. That's usually your role, but today, look and listen. Somebody you thought was nothing more than a party animal could have some very good advice. If the advice is to relax, that's all the more reason to listen.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) The testing period is about to begin. It's final week, and guess what? You're going to do fine. If you can just relax. That's the most important advice anyone can ever give to a Pisces. Don't freak out and you'll come up with the right answer. You always do. Sometimes you're so brilliant you surprise even the professors.

Iranian products exhibition draws 'hundreds' of consumers

By Munther Murjan

AMMAN — Hundreds of Jordanians are flocking to an Iranian exhibition in Amman to buy foodstuffs, Persian carpets, furniture and electrical appliances.

The one-week display, which opened on Saturday, was organised by the Hashemite Association for International Economic Cooperation, a non-governmental organisation chaired by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent.

All proceeds from the exhibition will go to a sports centre for the physically challenged, according to Ma'an Zabian, executive chairman of the association.

The display is the culmination of seven years of association contacts with Iranian trade officials and businesspersons to boost bilateral ties.

"We decided to organise the display because of Iran's growing commercial ties with Jordan and the fact that we

have various key Iranian figures in the association," Zabian told the Jordan Times.

Jordanian-Iranian trade levels, for years impacted by tense bilateral political ties, have grown over the last two years.

The balance of trade remains heavily in favour of Amman — 75 per cent of the \$26 million annual trade consists of exports of Jordanian phosphates and potash.

Jordan mainly imports Iranian food and machinery.

Zabian and other businesspersons said hundreds of Jordanians, encouraged by strong Muslim bonds and the relatively cheap prices of Iranian goods, were showing up at the expo each day.

Most of the displays visitors appeared more interested in buying less expensive products such as silver jewellery and foodstuffs, including nuts and dried fruits.

"It is days before Ramadan [the Islamic calendar's month of fasting], and everyone is looking for affordable foodstuffs," said Osama Masri, a security guard at the exhibit.

Iranian businesswoman Suhayla Hashemi, selling silk and woollen carpets and carved wooden furniture, said the prices, expensive in the eyes of many Jordanians, only reflected the cost of work and materials involved.

The display coincides with a three-day meeting of a Jordanian-Iranian joint committee to discuss industrial, economic and trade cooperation. Trade Minister Mohammad Saleh Hourani and his Iranian counterpart Gholam Rida Shafi'i are co-chairing the talks, which opened on Tuesday after days of preparations.

The exhibition ends on Dec. 18.

A.F.M. TRADE Tuesday, 15-12-98
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Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	218.000	215.000	-0.46%
NTL BK	1.600	1.680	+5.00%
BK OF JO	1.210	1.280	+4.13%
MODEL EAST BK	1.040	1.030	-0.96%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.420	1.410	-0.70%
THE HOUSING BK	2.740	2.780	+0.73%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.660	1.680	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.680	1.640	-1.20%
UNION BK	0.840	0.860	+2.38%
JO. INVEST. BK	1.480	1.450	-0.68%
BEIT ULMAL	0.700	0.690	-1.43%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.600	0.580	-1.67%
BANKS INDEX	281.380	point =	-0.10%
INSURANCE			
JO. INS	3.000	3.000	0.00%
JO. FRENCH INS	2.700	2.720	+0.74%
HOLY LAND INS	1.030	1.070	+3.88%
ARAB INS	1.850	1.900	+2.70%
JO. GULF INS	1.400	1.400	0.00%
ARLINS	1.300	1.230	-5.38%
INSURANCE INDEX	123.280	point =	+0.55%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.480	1.480	0.00%
VEHICLES OWNERS	2.480	2.580	+4.03%
ARAB INTL HOTELS	4.550	4.750	+4.40%
SHIPPING LINES	1.240	1.180	-4.84%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.870	0.900	+3.45%
REAL ESTATE	0.950	1.000	+5.26%
JO. INTL TRADING CENT	0.320	0.320	0.00%
AL-RAI	5.410	5.410	0.00%
AD-DUSTOR	5.980	6.290	+5.01%
COMMODORE	1.120	1.180	+5.36%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.820	0.820	0.00%
ARAB INTL FOR INVS & E	1.820	1.870	+2.80%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.120	1.140	+1.79%
SERVICES INDEX	107.180	point =	+2.17%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.000	3.130	+4.33%
PHOSPHATE	1.330	1.400	+5.24%
ARAB POTASH	3.700	3.700	0.00%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.230	10.210	-0.20%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRICU	1.040	1.060	+1.92%
WORSTED MILLS	5.750	5.950	+3.48%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.800	2.840	+1.43%
CERAMIC IND	1.140	1.140	0.00%
JO. DAIRY	2.800	2.800	0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.210	1.220	+0.83%
THE PUBLIC MINING	1.450	1.520	+4.83%
NTL STEEL	0.520	0.520	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	5.030	5.080	+0.99%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.570	0.560	-1.75%
JO. STEEL	0.930	0.930	0.00%
CHLORINE	1.240	1.250	+0.81%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.410	0.410	0.00%
PAPER CONVERTING	0.780	0.780	0.00%
NTL IND	0.420	0.430	+2.38%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.370	0.370	0.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	1.110	1.160	+4.50%
ALADDIN	2.320	2.300	-0.87%
GENERAL INVS	1.250	1.250	0.00%
NTL CABLE	0.680	0.680	0.00%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0.420	0.420	0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR	1.220	1.220	0.00%
EL-ZAY	1.250	1.270	+1.60%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.640	0.640	0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.480	0.480	0.00%
NEW CAPLES	0.630	0.630	0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.720	0.710	-1.39%
INDUSTRY INDEX	78.700	point =	+1.65%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK (75	0.990	0.890	+3.49%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.380	0.400	+5.26%
ISLAMIC INS	1.570	1.600	+1.91%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.750	0.700	-6.67%
AL - BYAL	0.810	0.810	0.00%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.590	0.590	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.350	0.350	0.00%
AL DAWLAH	0.590	0.590	0.00%
ARAB INTL. TRADE	0.230	0.220	-4.35%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.400	0.420	+5.00%
NAMCO	0.270	0.260	-3.70%
TEXTILE & PLASTIC	0.270	0.260	-3.70%
UNION TOBACCO	2.410	2.500	+3.73%
AL AL	0.540	0.550	+1.85%
UNITED ENG. IND	0.220	0.220	0.00%
INTL TEXTILE MANU	0.210	0.200	-4.76%
PEARL	0.410	0.430	+4.88%
NUTRI DAR	0.720	0.720	0.00%
GRAND INDEX	170.68	point =	+0.42%

ASEAN leaders reaffirm free-trade goals

(Continued from page 8)

sacking his finance minister and deputy, Anwar Ibrahim.

"After a decade of impressive growth, most of us in the region are now confronted with zero or negative growth for 1998," he noted.

The Thai baht's forced devaluation in July 1997 sparked a contagion that crushed regional currencies and stock markets, ending a decade of rapid economic growth.

Five ASEAN economies — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — are now mired in recession. The remaining members — Brunei, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam — have been hit severely by the fall-out.

Indonesia and Thailand needed multibillion dollar international bailouts.

"As a nation and a people, we have become impoverished," said Mahathir of the impact on Malaysia. "Our banks and corporations are almost collapsed."

Philippine President Joseph Estrada said the toll on Southeast Asian populations was "even more disturbing."

"As production fell and unemployment rose, more than 40 million people have been pushed back into absolute poverty, reversing much of the past gains in poverty alleviation," Estrada said.

He said ASEAN should accelerate its tariff reduction programme and enhance "regional investment dynamism" by offering better incentives to regional investors.

Indonesian President B.J. Habibie said the collapse of regional currencies and the massive outflows of capital had taken the heaviest toll "on the people of the ASEAN region."

"Tens of millions of workers lost their jobs as industries slowed down and companies went bankrupt," he said.

Habibie said trade and investment liberalisation would help attract investors and lead to the creation of "one vast integrated regional economy."

Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai said the entire region had become poorer because of the crisis, "but it does not mean ... we should turn inward."

"We all may not be able to achieve the same specific time-frame or move at the same pace (of liberalisation)," he acknowledged.

"But as long as we are able to redouble our efforts towards closer economic integration and seek to go at least one step beyond our pledged commitment, we will create a synergy of strength, capable of propelling ASEAN back to normality and on the path of renewed growth," Chuan added.

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Australian gold medals come at high cost

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia's gold medal haul at the past five Olympics was achieved at high cost — \$51.8 million dollars (\$32.1 million) per medal and a nation of fat, inactive spectators, a new study has found.

University of South Australia sports researchers also found that at current rates of expenditure, Australia could look forward to winning 20 more golds at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 — putting it comfortably into the top five in the medal table.

They examined the link between Australia's funding for elite sport and the medal haul at Olympiads from 1980 to 1996 and found the 25 golds won between Moscow and Atlanta each carried a taxpayer-funded price tag of \$1.8 million.

The cost for each of the 115 gold medals won at the five Olympics was \$11.3 million.

But exercise science Associate Professor Kevin Norton said the huge amounts of money which reaped rewards at Olympic level failed to provide any impetus for community participation in sport.

Administrators tried to justify the funding with the trickle-down theory, which says that if swimming superstar Kieren Perkins, for example, wins a swimming gold medal then thousands of children will take up swimming.

But he said his research showed that as with the trickle-down theory in economics, it does not work. In fact the opposite had happened — more money for elite sport meant more Olympic gold medals but less public participation.

"We are a nation of spectators," Norton said.

"There has been less and less activity, there's no money left for community-based sport. What we are saying will happen doesn't happen, it's going completely in the opposite direction."

The study tallied the cost of elite sport in the run-up to the past four Olympics, compared it with the number of medals won and found a direct relationship.

An estimated \$1.0 billion will be spent in the four years leading up to the Sydney 2000 Games, which Norton confidently predicted would result in 20 gold medals.

"For \$1.0 billion we would get just less than 20 but we will probably get one or two more on the basis of the home crowd advantage. There is always a definite advantage there," he said.

"But other countries are now seeing the pattern. South Africa has asked us to help them set up sports institutes. Britain wants help with a cricket academy and a sports institute."

However, Norton said the well of potential Olympic medalists would run dry if low-level sport continued to be overlooked in favour of elite athletes.

But it would be pointless to try to change the situation in the lead-up to the Sydney Games, with politicians equating a successful Olympics with easy votes, he added.

Australian Institute of Sport executive director Jim Fergusson defended the current funding level for elite sport and said it was "a drop in the ocean" compared to funding for community-based sport.

"It is higher at the federal level but if you add to that funding at a state and local level, community-based sport gets far greater funding," Fergusson said.

"You have to take into account what else happens in a four-year period. There are world championships, world cups, Pan Pacific Games, Commonwealth Games, regular competitions. They are all funded by the same source," he said.



Chinese Taipei's Hsing-Su Yen (R) keeps an eye on the ball as he guards Iran's S. Kamalian during quarterfinal basketball action at the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. Taipei beat Iran 86-84 in OT (AFP photo)

China and South Korea reach Asian basketball semis

BANGKOK (AFP) — The Philippines men's basketball team were given a scare before beating Thailand 86-60 to claim a place in the Asian Games semi-finals alongside China and South Korea.

The all amateur Thai side scored with five three point shots to level the match 36-36 at the break.

But the more experienced Philippines professionals took control in the second half with 36-year-old Alan Caidic getting two three-pointers to spark a Philippine run that gave the winning gap.

China and South Korea trounced their latest opponents in their second round group matches to ensure

semi-final places. Both still have a match to go.

China, looking for a fourth straight men's title, hammered Kazakhstan 106-55 in Group A while South Korea, silver medalist in Hiroshima four years ago, beat the United Arab Emirates 106-51.

Sun Jun scored 16 points to lead six Chinese scorers.



Kazakhstan's A. Nikishin (R) tries to block a jump shot by China's Liu Yudong during quarterfinal action in men's basketball at the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. China won 106-55 (AFP photo)

2nd Division Basketball Championship Wihdat aim to increase lead

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The eight teams competing in the Second Division Basketball Championship continue their matches Wednesday with 10 days left for the championship.

While the top two positions are relatively clear now, there are eight matches left in the competition to determine the final standings and the top two teams that will be promoted to the First Division.

Al Wihdat are unrivalled atop the standings and are slated to clinch the top qualifying slot back to the First Division.

Led by coach Ghaieth Al Najjar who previously trained Al Ahli, Al Wihdat are assured of keeping their lead as they have scored five wins easily passing the 100-mark in all their matches.

Playing in the Second Division for only the second year, Al Wihdat will next meet Al Rayeh and

Team	P	W	L	PF	SA	Pts
Wihdat	5	5	-	555	240	10
Fuheis	5	4	1	363	295	9
Homentmen	5	4	1	327	291	9
Ebbin	5	3	2	293	352	8
Ashrafieh	5	2	3	292	318	7
Abu Nusair	5	1	4	284	346	6
Rayeh	5	1	4	283	339	6
Samma	5	-	5	149	365	5

STANDINGS

have their last match against Al Fuheis on Dec. 26.

Al Fuheis are second on points for now and have nearly lost their qualifying chance after losing to Homentmen in their last match.

Homentmen are third on score difference but are assured of moving with Al Wihdat to the prestigious First Division after an absence of three years.

They have relatively easy matches ahead and have only lost to Al Wihdat. Their main rivals for runner-up spot Al Fuheis, meanwhile have their only hope in beating

Al Wihdat which seems a difficult task. If they lose they will drop to third place and therefore lose the qualifying chance to the First Division.

Homentmen next face Abu Nusair while Fuheis have an easy match against Samma. Fourth placed Ebbin face Al Ashrafieh in the fight for fourth place.

The eight-team event concludes Dec. 26 when top two of the eight teams will be promoted this year making the total number of First Division teams eight instead of six.

Missing from the event is Al Watani, a former First Division team who were relegated but failed to par-

ticipate in the Second Division.

Also missing the event are teams like Gazzet Hashem, Karak and Sahab. The Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) this year organised only three other events: the First Division and the Under-14 won by Al Orthodoxi, and the Under-16 won by Al Jazireh.

The women's juniors, and Under-22 were cancelled while the JBF is discussing holding the under-18 with the concerned clubs.

The First Division includes Al Orthodoxi, Al Ahli, Al Jazireh, Al Jalil, Al Hussein and Al Jeel.

Jayasinghe says not afraid of Chinese

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan sprinter Susanthika Jayasinghe on Tuesday denounced criticism that she pulled out of the Asian Games because of fears about losing to a Chinese rival.

Jayasinghe insisted the only reason she pulled out of the Games in Bangkok was because of injury.

"Everybody seems to think I was afraid of the Chinese runner. I am a person who has won world events. People should not demean me by thinking I am afraid to run in an Asian event," Jayasinghe told Reuters in an interview after returning from Bangkok.

"I was just not able to run. Only I know my health condition, no one else can talk for me and I did not feel well enough to run," she said.

Jayasinghe said she withdrew from the 100 and 200 metres events on Monday due to a hamstring injury.

She had earlier qualified second fastest in the 100 metres preliminaries on Sunday clocking a respectable 11.30 seconds, but was left trailing behind Li Xuemei of China on 10.99.

Li, the Asian record holder over both sprint distances, won Monday's final and is the hot favourite to take the 200 metres.

"After running the heats I couldn't even stand up properly."

I started bleeding from my nose and felt very sick," Jayasinghe said.

"Even if she (Li) ran

10.60 I could have beaten it. The Chinese were nowhere when I won the silver at the World Championships," she said.

Sri Lankan sports officials in Bangkok have said they were unhappy with Jayasinghe's withdrawal.

"We feel she should have run for the country to win some medals," one official said.

The state-owned Daily News said Damayanthi Darsa, who won the gold in the women's 400 metres, had taken over from Jayasinghe as Sri Lanka's new sprint queen.

Jayasinghe became Sri Lanka's most successful athlete when she won the silver in the 200 metres event in the 1997 World Championships in Athens.

The sprinter said she had lacked continuous training this year after being dogged by a drugs scandal.

"I didn't want to injure myself further by running at the Games and then having another year of poor train-

ing. My main aim now is to train well and get a gold at the World Championships next year," she said.

Jayasinghe tested positive for the steroid Nandrolone in April but had her ban lifted by Sri Lankan athletics officials.

She is still waiting for a final decision on her case from the International Athletic Federation.

"I am not afraid of their (IAAF's) ruling. Why should I be punished when I haven't done anything wrong," Jayasinghe said.

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New Algerian premier takes over

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian President Liamine Zeroual appointed career diplomat Ismail Hamdani as prime minister on Tuesday, replacing Ahmed Ouyahia, who resigned the previous day, a presidential statement said.

Hamdani immediately pledged to hold wide-ranging dialogue with politicians to try to ease the crisis in the violence-stricken North African country and to strengthen its nascent multiparty democracy.

"The task is difficult but not impossible with the help of all politicians, business people, workers and all Algerians," he told state-run radio.

Algeria has been riven with violence since the authorities in January 1992 cancelled a general election in which

Islamists had taken a commanding lead. More than 65,000 people have since died.

Hamdani, 68, and a member of parliament, said he would hold contacts with political parties, representatives of workers, labour and business organisations before announcing the line-up of his cabinet and its programme.

"The first priority is to ease the crisis and continue improving the situation and strengthening the democratic process in the country," he said.

He said he would make some change in the current cabinet but gave no details.

Al Khabar daily newspaper said on Tuesday Hamdani would keep the outgoing cabinet mostly unchanged, except for the interior, communica-

tion and justice ministers.

Newspapers said Hamdani's would focus on steering Algeria into a presidential election planned for April to replace Zeroual, who is cutting short his five-year mandate by 19 months.

Le Quotidien d'Oran said Abdelmalek Sellal, an ambassador to Hungary, would replace Mustapha Benmansour as interior minister while Abdelaziz Rahabi would become communication and culture minister, replacing Hamraoui Habib Chawki.

Ghousi Mekamcha, a law scholar and parliament member, will be justice minister in place of Mohammed Adami who resigned in November amid malpractice allegations, the newspaper said.

The interior, justice and communication ministers will be directly involved in preparing and handling the next poll.

Major opposition parties had demanded Ouyahia's dismissal, accusing him of having failed to stop what they call widespread cheating in favour of the main ruling National Democratic Rally (RND) party in the local elections in 1997.

The 46-year-old Ouyahia's foes also held him responsible for the government's failure to end massacres of villagers by suspected Muslim rebels.

Algeria's main workers' unions blame him for fuelling unemployment by shutting down some 1,000 ailing state-owned companies, causing the layoffs of about 400,000 workers.



TRILATERAL SUMMIT: U.S. President Bill Clinton, flanked by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, watches Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat before the start of their trilateral meeting at the Erez Crossing linking Gaza to Israel on Tuesday. Clinton failed to persuade Israel to resume the troop withdrawals called for under the Wye River peace accord (AP photo)

Tokyoites vent anger at annual screaming contest

TOKYO (AP) — Cacophony reigned more supreme than usual in central Tokyo Tuesday as dozens of people screamed and bellowed in a contest that had but a single rule: to be as loud as possible. Pent-up frustrations at Japan's recession, the anguish of breaking up and hostility toward smoking smokers — all found release as contestants screamed messages into a decibel gauge at the 10th annual "Big Voice" competition. Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi was the target of many of the vocal assaults.

Marceau beats out Stone as vixen in Bond movie

PARIS (AP) — Sophie Marceau edged out Sharon Stone for vixen in the new James Bond movie. Le Parisien reported Monday. The 32-year-old French actress has starred in "Braveheart" and "Farewell My Concubine." She also appears in "The English Patient" and "The Piano." Marceau beat out Stone for the part and signed her contract with MGM studios last week.

Spencer's house destroyed by fire

CAPE TOWN (AP) — Fire destroyed the roof and floor of Earl Spencer's house on Monday after lightning struck the thatched roof, firemen said. About a dozen firemen and three fire engines were at the house of Spencer, brother to the late Princess Diana, at 7 p.m. local time. Spencer, a member of the British aristocracy, and his children were not home when the fire started, but returned soon after. They left the premises again, according to the fireman, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Lewinsky lawyer suffers from 'post-traumatic-stress syndrome'

NEW YORK (AP) — William Ginsburg, who met a burst of publicity as one of Monica Lewinsky's lawyers during the investigation of President Clinton, says the case took quite a personal toll. "I am suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome from this case," Ginsburg said in the Dec. 21 issue of The New Yorker magazine. "It took me months to recover." The Lewinsky case made him lose touch with his family and his ability to focus on trial work, Ginsburg said in an article retelling the events of the past year from his perspective.

Bottles of bubbly released for New Year's Eve

REIMS (AFP) — France's champagne producers have released the equivalent of 74 million bottles of 1997, 1998 and 1999 bubbly from their reserves in order to meet the heavy demand expected for New Year's Eve celebrations. The move is expected to enable champagne producers to recoup their stocks after a burst in demand, already begun, for New Year's Eve 1999, the CIVCV champagne producers' committee said Tuesday. Sales for 1998 are estimated at 290 million bottles, and are expected to easily surpass 300 million next year.

Iranian writers mourn colleague as arrests made

TEHRAN (R) — About 1,000 Iranian writers and their secularist supporters gathered on Tuesday to bury poet Mohammad Mokhtari, amid word the authorities had made arrests in the string of mystery murders against cultural figures.

But the mourners at Tehran's Al Nabi mosque, a number of whom had been in hiding in recent days, seemed to hold out little hope the killings that have claimed at least three dissident writers and two political activists would stop.

"They have started with the [secularist] dissidents who do not pose any

threat to the system and are not a possible alternative in political terms," said one writer, who asked not to be identified.

"But they will move on to the Islamic intellectuals who have been seriously criticising the legitimacy of the system," he said.

Late on Monday, a judiciary spokesman said police had made several arrests in connection to the murders, but no details were available.

Iranian moderates have blasted conservative rivals in the state security apparatus for failing to halt a string of mystery murders that has

unnerved the nation and forced some secularist intellectuals into hiding.

In their first concerted response to the recent killing or disappearance of four writers and a husband-and-wife team of political dissidents, influential backers of President Mohammad Khatami said it was time for the hardliners in control of the "power ministries" to put an immediate end to the violence.

"Enough talking, arrest the murderers," said the daily Zan, published by Faezeh Hashemi, a leading moderate figure and a daughter of former President Akbar Hashemi

Rafsanjani.

Two of the victims had been summoned in October to a revolutionary court after they tried to revive a banned authors' union, raising fears their deaths were aimed at silencing dissent.

Last month, nationalist opposition leader Dariush Forouhar and his wife Farvaneh were murdered in their home. To date, the security service and other conservative-run bodies have pointed the finger at foreign enemies such as Israel and the United States.

On Monday, Iran's supreme leader added his

voice to the chorus of attacks on "world arrogance," Iranian political shorthand for the West and Washington in particular.

The body of Mohammad Jafar Pouyandeh was identified at the weekend by relatives, who said he seemed to have been strangled.

Dissident writers Mohammad Mokhtari and Javad Sharif were found dead earlier in what friends said were suspicious circumstances.

A fourth dissident intellectual, Pirouz Davani is missing and feared dead after disappearing in August.

Palestinian prisoners suspend hunger strike

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Some 2,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israel suspended a 10-day-old hunger strike Tuesday amid reports that Israel had agreed to study the release of political detainees on a case-by-case basis, Palestinian sources said.

Issa Karaka, head of the prisoners' association on the West Bank, announced the end of the strike during a press conference in Bethlehem. "The decision was taken by the prisoners themselves," Karaka said.

But he added that "there will be neither peace nor security for Israelis until they are freed." The prisoners began their protest after Israel insisted on freeing mostly common criminals among the 750 Palestinian detainees it agreed to release under the U.S.-brokered Wye River peace accord.

The Israeli decision sparked widespread rioting in the Palestinian territories which led Israel to suspend application of further West Bank withdrawals required by the Wye agreement. Palestinian leaders said Israel was obliged under the deal to release persons jailed for politically-motivated actions, notably carried out before the first Israel-PLO peace accords in 1993.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused to free virtually any of the some 2,400 political prisoners in Israeli jails, saying they were murderers with "Israeli blood on their hands."

He publicly maintained the hard-line following a summit meeting Tuesday with U.S. President Bill Clinton and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. But U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said later that Israel had agreed to examine the possible release of political detainees on a "case-by-case basis."

Clinton ends mission

(Continued from page 1)

"I hope we can keep pretty much to the schedule," Clinton said.

A senior U.S. official, who asked not to be identified by name, said Clinton wanted the withdrawal carried out fast.

"We don't want it delayed and we want it done as soon as possible," the official said.

Netanyahu also declared that he would not alter his terms for releasing Palestinian prisoners, an issue that has triggered violent protests across the West Bank.

Arafat, who later guided Clinton on a Christmas visit to Bethlehem in the West Bank, made no comment. His adviser Marwan Kanafani said the summit showed "once again that Mr. Netanyahu is not interested in the peace process."

Right-winger Netanyahu, whose political survival has been put at risk by hard-line opposition in his coalition to Wye, placed the accord on hold before Clinton's visit over what he alleges is a catalogue of Palestinian violations.

Facing a no-confidence vote in parliament next Monday, he repeated after the summit that no more land would be transferred until the Palestinians met their commitments under the deal.

"If they do it, I cannot tell you how much time we would take. The faster they do it, the faster we will redeploy," Netanyahu said.

He welcomed a vote by Palestinian leaders in Gaza reaffirming Israel's right to exist — a central element of the Wye accord — which Clinton witnessed on Monday on an historic first visit to Palestinian-ruled soil by a U.S. president.

But Netanyahu again reeled off a raft of conditions he said the Palestinians must meet, from collecting illegal weapons to halting alleged incitement to violence and a public renunciation by Arafat of any unilateral declaration of an independent state.

He insisted that Israel would not free Palestinian prisoners with "blood on their hands." Palestinians see the same detainees, held for attacks on Israelis, as heroes in the armed

struggle whose end they reaffirmed on Monday.

"No amount of pressure will force us to release terrorist murderers... no amount of pressure will force us to make withdrawals when the Palestinians don't carry out their part. It's just not a subject on the table," Netanyahu said.

Israel agreed to Wye to withdraw from a further 13 per cent of the West Bank in three stages, the first carried out last month, in return for specific Palestinian security steps.

It also agreed verbally to free 750 Palestinian prisoners in three groups but enraged Palestinians when it included 150 common criminals in the first batch.

Though Washington has backed Israel's approach, the issue has sparked tensions. Israel objected when Clinton on Monday likened children of Israeli-held Palestinian prisoners to the children of Israelis killed by Palestinians.

Clinton said an "informal channel" had been set up to tackle the prisoner issue.

He said a steering committee on several other specific issues, including confiscation of illegal weapons by the Palestinians, would meet on Tuesday.

"I anticipate that there will be agreement today, at the end of this meeting, that a lot of the requirements from Wye for this next phase have in fact been met," he said.

U.S. National Security Adviser Sandy Berger said Netanyahu and Arafat had agreed at the summit to speed up negotiations on a final peace settlement that technically should be concluded by May 4, 1999, under the Oslo interim peace process begun in 1993.

Arafat has said Palestinians have the right to declare an independent state if no deal is reached by the deadline.

"There is no obligation in the Wye agreement for Arafat to renounce his hopes and aspirations," Berger told reporters.

But he added: "I think it would be extremely helpful to express those in terms of what he seeks to accomplish through negotiations. If that takes place it will eliminate one of the irritants to the Israelis."

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